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SCIENCE FICTION

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THE LIFE BEYOND
ASTOUNDING NOVEL BY
JOHN COLERIDGE

MARCH
1941

WISDOM OF
THE DEAD

by
ED EARL REPP

also
POLTON CROSS
THORNTON AYRE
HELEN WEINBAUM



SCIENCE FICTION

A ORIAL NEW NOVEL
BY JOHN COLERIDGE

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JET BLACK!

(ALSO 7 SHADES OF BLACK, BROWN, TITIAN AND BLONDE)

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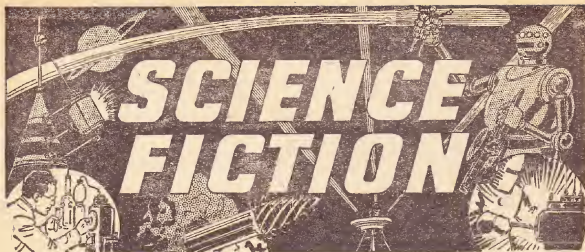


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Vol. II, No. 4

March, 1941

THREE AMAZING NOVELETS

THE LIFE BEYOND John Coleridge 10

Not alive—not dead! Such is the fate of the scientists Hall and Kard, blown into a weird world of half-life through their attempts to tamper with Nature! There the bodiless intelligences that once were men find at their disposal a source of limitless Power over the world!

BEINGS OF THE OOZE John M. Taylor 39

From out of the mud of that little moon of Saturn miraculously springs a race of friendly little frog-men—creatures who were to become slaves of Spence Burkly, until their vengeance comes in the form of the Rotting Death, the curse of the Ancients upon the Transgressors!

BARGAIN WITH COLOSSUS Helen Weinbaum 91

The entire race of Uranians would become extinct unless Goth could enlist the aid of the Earthmen—but how could he expect aid after he had unknowingly trampled the civilization of the tiny Earthmen under his gigantic feet?

THREE CHOICE SHORT STORIES

STAR OF BLUE Milton Kaletsky 54

Ankeen, Ruler of Mars had finally conquered the Earth—or so he thought—until a pin-point of blue from the depths of space throws a new light on the mightiest battle of all time!

SCIENCE FROM SYRACUSE Polton Cross 61

Archimedes—the greatest scientist the Earth has even known—steps into the world of 1960 A.D. from out of the ancient city of Syracuse! What is the *real* plan of this great mind, as he throws the world into total warfare?

WISDOM OF THE DEAD Ed Earl Repp 75

Dr. Benjamin saw with horror the end of civilization in the tremendous War of 1970—a war to end people—and he seeks for a permanent peace plan through the aid of ten mighty men who have been dead for centuries!

SPECIAL FEATURES

THE ETERNAL CONFLICT (Science Department) 59

THE FANTASY FAN (Special Fan Feature) 73

THE TELEPATH (Where Readers and Editor Exchange Thoughts) 85

WAR VERSUS LOGIC (Editorial) Charles D. Hornig 90



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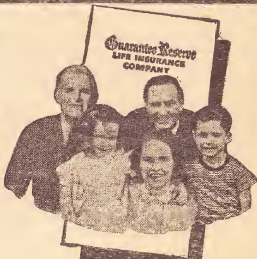
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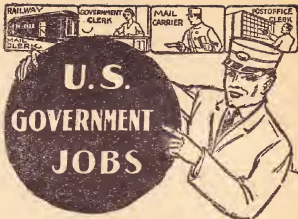
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The Life Beyond

By JOHN COLERIDGE

A blinding flash—a terrific explosion—the atom-smasher disrupts in a blaze of glory; Hall and Kard are crushed beyond recognition! But the two great scientists find themselves undead—victims—of a strange, bodiless existence brought about by their ungodly experiments—wielders of a Power not intended for Man—a Power to create unlimited Good—or Evil!

CHAPTER ONE

MYSTERIOUS AWAKENING

PROFESSOR ERIC HALL'S dazed mind cleared slowly.

"Well," he thought, "I'm still alive. I thought that was the end. And I did seem to see the walls tumbling and the electron-discharge coming my way. Queer sensation, when it struck

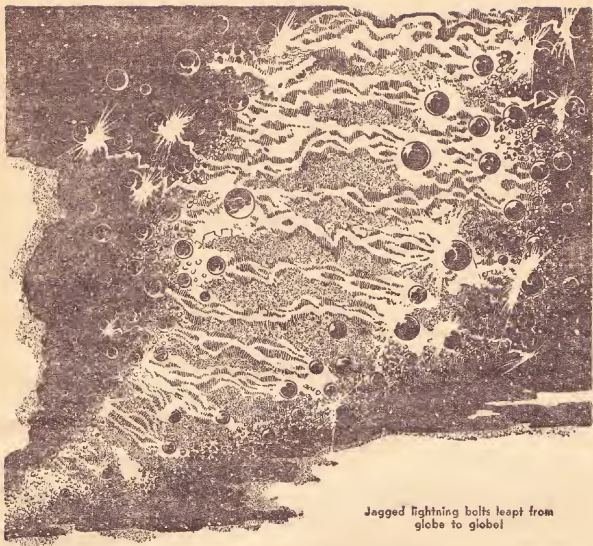
—exquisite pain that was half a frightful pleasure, in some mad way. I feel all right now, though, only I can't see. I wonder what—"

"So do I!"

It was Dr. Kard's voice!

"I don't see either. I feel—no, I don't feel. I don't feel anything! Good God! Are we both paralyzed and blind from the—from whatever happened?"





Jagged lightning bolts leapt from globe to globel

"Maybe—maybe you're right," returned Hall, unhappily. "Still, how is it that we talk to each other by—thought? Telepathy, in plain words?"

"What happened there at the last, Hall?" queried Kard. "Maybe we can figure this out, step by step. First of all, the electron blast blew the vitrolite tube to vapor. Secondly, the explosion blew the laboratory apart, like a paper toy. Thirdly, the electron-discharge came our way. So what happened to us? Good Lord, we should have been killed!"

"Yes, we should have been—on all three counts," mused Hall. "It would be a miracle to escape."

"Would be?"

"Would have been, I mean."

"What *do* you mean, Hall?"

"I mean—I think we *were* killed! We're dead! At least our *bodies* died in that explosion."

There was silence between them for a moment.

"And where are we—our *minds*?" ventured Kard.

"Lord, I don't know!" returned Professor Hall forlornly. "I wish I could see."

Then, as though this had been a command, he did see.

It was as sudden as the lifting of a curtain. His view seemed to be one

Great New Drama-Packed Novel of Time and Space!

high above Earth, perhaps a mile. Fleecy clouds floated lazily nearby. The ground lay like a checkerboard, stretching interminably in all directions.

Hall's first reaction was a stab of fear, for he could see no part of an airplane or balloon that might be supporting him.

"Heavens, I'll fall!" he thought, and promptly felt himself dip downward.

But at almost the same instant, his panic cleared. He thought, "If I didn't fall before, hanging up here like a cloud, why should I know?"

Simultaneously, he ceased falling. He had dropped no more than a few yards.

Puzzled, he remained suspended, hardly daring to think further. He noticed now that his vision seemed curiously to include all directions, as though he had eyes in the back of him, at the top, and all over. He noticed also, just a few feet away, a strange sort of tenuous ball of vapor that was not like the clouds. It was spherical in shape and almost invisible. It looked like the ghost of a ball of smoke.

But all this while, in a subconscious, surreptitious way, he had been trying to see something else—his body. Yet his all-encompassing vision could not detect the slightest sign of a leg or arm.

"Well," he sighed mentally, "there's no use hoping any more. *We have no bodies!*"

KARD had come to the same conclusion, also suddenly seeing and momentarily falling.

"But where are you, Hall? And just *what* are you?"

"I'm right here, Kard, right next to you. But I'm not the physical Professor Eric Hall you once knew. I'm just a cloud of—well, intelligence."

"Good Lord!" cried out the startled

Dr. Kard, finding he could express surprise just as well with his thought-voice as he had before with his larynx. "You're that globe of almost transparent mistiness a few feet away! And I'm the same to you, Hall?"

"Yes."

There was silence again.

"We're like ghosts!" murmured Kard. "Is this the Life-After-Death?"

"No," rationalized Professor Hall. "Let's remember we're scientists—or were. It's a crazy, unprecedented thing, but here we are, a mile in the air, having no bodies and existing only as mental wraiths. It's like taking a dose of castor oil and liking it."

"But how do you explain it, Hall?"

It did not seem so frightening, now that they had calmly accepted the bare fact of it. As scientists, they had always taken the strange and inexplicable things of the mysterious universe in their stride. Their mentalities, still as scientific in attitude as before, searched now only for the reason, since the fact was apparent.

"I don't know if I can," returned Hall slowly. "The rule of science is casualty. The billion-volt discharge escaped from the gun, struck us. That was the cause. What was the effect?"

"That's easy," returned Kard, half sneeringly. "Death! Only we didn't die—completely. So, Professor Hall?"

Dr. Kard was always jealous of Hall's keen, analytical mind. It was the first sign that not only their intellects, but their basic natures as well, had been carried over into this new existence.

For a moment, Hall was silent. Then he said, changing the subject, "I've been looking around and I think I see our laboratory down there—*former* laboratory. Let's go down to it and look things over."

"Go down—but how?"

"By wishing!" retorted Hall, with-

out sarcasm. "I have an idea that—well, anyway, we wished, or willed ourselves to see and it worked, so let's try this. Just make a sort of wish to be hovering over the laboratory. All set? Wish!"

The next moment was utter confusion to the two disembodied scientists.

They seemed caught in a terrific silent wind that they did not feel, but which nevertheless was there. A dim warning worked in Hall's thoughts. He sensed a danger that made him shriek:

"Stop! Dr. Kard, say stop!"

Abruptly, after these self-imposed commands, they stopped. They were much nearer the ground.

"It felt like someone gave us a tremendous push!" commented Kard. "Your form has changed, Hall—to something like a squeezed egg!"

"Automatic streamlining," hazarded the professor. "We were going through the air at a terrific rate. Whatever those globe-shapes of ours are made of, we were in danger of being pulled apart by air-resistance. At least we're sure of one thing, Kard. We're not pure mentality. We have physical substance of one sort or other. We'll have to go slower. Say 20 miles an hour. Let's wish ourselves down to the lab at that speed."

As though Aladdin's evil genii were their slave, their corresponding wish eased them through the air at the speed desired. Hall had a persistent conviction that if they had a speedometer, it would register exactly 20 miles an hour.

Side by side, the two almost-invisible globes descended to Earth. Soon they were hovering over the ruin of their laboratory, well beyond the outskirts of the great industrial plant whose funds had financed the ill-fated project.

It was mere débris. Bricks were scattered for a half mile. The power-house was a caved-in wreck, with pieces of smashed machinery scattered in all directions. The atomic-gun itself had split into two great halves, fifty feet apart.

A large crowd had gathered, but the main area had been roped off. Police were shoving gawkers back. Several ambulances were parked nearby. Figures were walking and poking among the ruins. It was the usual scene of confusion around any disastrous occurrence.

"It was a mighty big explosion all right," Dr. Kard said mentally to his companion. "It must have happened only an hour or so ago. The metal of the gun is still smoking."

"Yes," said Hall sadly. "The ruin of a great experiment. I'm still sure that a billion volts, properly controlled, will accomplish large-scale transmutation."

"But uncontrolled, as it was, it merely performed the transmutation of you and me into—well, it's anybody's guess," Kard returned. "What do you suppose caused the failure of the apparatus?"

"That isn't important," deprecated Hall. "Not to us any more. Look—they're taking the bodies out of the power-house. MacKayne and his men. All three killed, too!"

"By the way, where are *our* bodies?" queried Kard. "Let's go closer—"

The two mental wraiths, quite invisible to the people around, floated down and hovered over the ambulances. They saw the broken, twisted bodies of the three power-house men carried in stretchers to the vehicles and loaded in. Then two more stretchers appeared. The bodies in them were hardly recognizable. The skin had been charred black, and some crush-

ing weight had flattened them all out of shape.

"And that," whispered Kard, "is us!"

"What's left of us!" murmured Hall forlornly.

THEY could not hear sound, but they had already noticed that they could detect thought in the people around. The white-robed coroner superintending the business shook his head sadly as his assistants unceremoniously shoved the bodies into the car that would take them to the morgue.

"They're sure dead!" he said aloud, as though passing his medical opinion.

"That's what *you* think!" said Dr. Kard in his psychic-voice.

The doctor glanced suspiciously at his assistants.

"Who said that?" he demanded. "This is hardly the time for levity."

The assistants looked at him blankly.

"Doctor, do you believe in ghosts?" radiated Kard maliciously, hovering just over the man's head.

The doctor turned a little pale, glanced uneasily around, then shouted orders for the cars to leave. Police-men cleared a lane among the pressing crowds and the last mortal remains of Professor Eric Hall and Dr. Phil Kard were borne away from the spot at which they had met death—or something strikingly similar.

This is depressing," said Hall. "Let's go. Twenty miles an hour, a mile high."

With the ease of magic, they arose above the scene of recent catastrophe, climbing toward the lacy clouds. There was no effort to it, no definable action on their part. They simply willed themselves upward, at a certain speed, and the wish became accomplishment.

As they rose from warmer air to cooler in the heights, the two globes became surrounded with a misty halo that gradually deepened. Soon they were milky-white.

"Water is condensing within us," said Kard, puzzled. "Little droplets of water are forming all around us, and at the bottom—if we have bottoms—big drops are collecting and dripping off. What—"

"That's it!" broke in Hall. "That confirms my guesses."

"Well?"

"This is the well-known principle of condensation—change from a vapor to a liquid state. While we were down below in the warm air, our globes occluded water vapor. Now, while passing colder strata, the vapor condensed."

"Elementary," scoffed Dr. Kard.

"What promotes condensation, though? Dust, or any small particles, such as—electrons! Our physical bodies may be going to dust, but we—here—aren't dust. We're electrons, two clouds of them."

"Electrons!" snapped Kard dubiously. "Just—just electrons?"

"Why not?" replied Hall with growing assurance. "It isn't so amazing. That's why we're so weightless, and practically invisible. I figure it this way. The billion-volt discharge of electrons struck us, flowed over and through our bodies—through every cell. Trillions upon countless trillions of electrons poured into our nervous systems and our brains. Somehow, these electrons took up the pattern of our brains, minds, neural systems, personalities—they are all bound up in one, like a plate taking the impress of a die. As this new electron-pattern, we rode the concussion wave of the explosion and were blown a mile high, where we later regained consciousness."

Kard digested that.

"Sounds logical," he admitted, faintly jealous again. "But what about our seeing, and telepathy, and this strange process of wishing ourselves somewhere, and arriving without effort?"

"I have a vague idea—well, no, I don't really know," admitted Hall. "We'll have to figure those things out later. Look, the sun is setting."

From their aerial perch, the sunset was a magnificent sight. The two sentient globes watched as slowly changing hues splashed over the canvas of the sky. An infinite variety of color paraded down the corridor of night after the marching sun, colors that both of them suddenly realized they had never seen before.

"If you ask me," said Kard, "we're seeing by the entire electro-magnetic scale, instead of just with ordinary light—infra-red, ultra-violet, and all the way up the scale to cosmic-rays."

"I believe you're right," mused Hall. "Everything is new in this new—ah—world—ah—excuse me! I'd swear I just yawned!"

"I had the same sensation a minute ago. But how can we yawn, without mouths?"

"We're yawning mentally!" hazarded the professor. "Every physical reflex has its mental counterpart. Our subconscious minds evidently don't quite realize that our bodies are gone. I think there's no help for it but to try some sleep. It's no wonder we're tired, though. We had hardly any decent sleep for a week, preparing for the experiment. It's night now. Good night, Kard."

"But how will we know we're safe?" objected Kard. "We might fall while asleep."

"We won't," assured Hall. "We have no weight to speak of. When we first regained our senses and thought

we were going to fall, it was because we had *commanded* ourselves to, in the very fear of it."

"Still," said Kard worriedly, "I don't quite like the idea of just dropping off to sleep up here, hanging on the rough side of nothing. It seems—well, spooky."

"There's no danger," insisted Hall. "Stop worrying. What can harm us up here, a mile high? Meteors? One chance in a billion. A windstorm? If one comes, we'll move with it."

"What about birds. If one flapped its way through us—"

"Birds rarely fly a mile high. Now go to sleep. I'm tired."

Kard, himself strangely weary, decided the professor was right and closed his eyes by the simple expedient of willing himself not to see. He was almost startled by the abrupt way in which utter blackness blotted out the stars overhead, and the earth lights below. A pleasant lethargy stole over them, and they fell soundly asleep.

As the night wore on, the two mentalities that had once been clothed in flesh and bones floated aimlessly a mile above ground,—as fast asleep as any in beds below.

CHAPTER TWO

VISITATION TO EARTH

WHEN they awoke, in daylight again, they found it raining. Large drops of water pelted through them, as though they were sieves. They felt no discomfort.

Jagged lances of lightning crackled across the sky, from cloud to cloud. Suddenly they saw a brilliant light leap straight for them. They tried to duck but knew it was useless. When the lightning bolt struck, a brilliant pyrotechnic of violet sparks surrounded the two globes. But all they felt was an electrical tingle over their

outer surfaces and a peculiar feeling of being stuffed with something. Nothing else happened, though they had been struck by lightning powerful enough to kill ten men.

"Did you see what happened?" laughed Professor Hall. "A lightning bolt is simply a stream of electrons, at a potential of 15 or 20 million volts. It so happens we represent a potential of electrons at a billion volts. So when the bolt struck us, it just drained away and petered out. We electrocuted the lightning flash!"

It was calm and clear higher, where they went later. They were in the stratosphere—no wind or clouds. Far below the storm raged itself out and began to die away.

"Hall, it may be my imagination, but I seem to be breathing with difficulty, only I know I'm not breathing!"

"It's another of our buried reflexes," said Hall. "Like our yawning. Our subconscious mind is warning our body that the air is rarefied. But we have no bodies. Notice that we don't feel hungry—because the lightning bolt kindly fed us its electrons. That was the sensation of being stuffed that we felt."

There was silence between them for a while. They watched the clouds of storm dispel. The world became bathed in the warm wash of sunlight. The bright dot of an airplane winged its way over the land like a metallic bee.

Earth lay below them, the earth they had once lived and moved in. Something akin to a deep sigh came from the invisible depths of the two globes.

"You know, Hall," said Kard slowly, "I'm just thinking. We're probably doomed to this sort of existence for li—for a long time."

"Yes."

"It's appalling in a way, to think of it."

"Yes."

"We had friends, relatives below there—activities and occupations—something to do! A complete life cycle that made up our daily lives. But now it's like a new world, with us. How are we going to keep ourselves occupied? What are we going to *do*? What lies ahead of us—dreary years of ghostly wandering over the world in which we no longer belong? Endless hours of thinking, thinking—"

"Don't get morbid," admonished Hall, breaking in. "Here we are, and we'll have to make the best of it. However, I don't think we'll be able to break the ties entirely that bind us to our former lives. I have a suggestion to make right now, in that line. I have a wife—a widow!—and three children down there in the world. I'm going to visit them. You have someone to go to, also."

"Visit them?—as the next thing to ghosts? And then what?"

"Well, I don't know. But I'm going down there, Kard. I must see them."

"I have no wife," said Kard thoughtfully. "However, I'll drop in on my brother. Let's go down. Forty miles an hour."

SHIMMERING like globular jellyfish, that had somehow been transferred to an aerial life, they dropped downward. Nothing was spoken between them. Each was filled with his own thoughts of unfulfilled destiny. When they were hovering over their laboratory site, among whose ruins workmen were already clearing away the débris, Professor Hall said:

"We'll meet here again at noon."

"Right, professor."

The globe of Dr. Kard moved toward the west side of town, vanish-

ing in the air. Alone, Professor Hall rose and then swept toward the city's north side, in whose suburban district he had lived for twenty years. High above the rooftops he went, observing the morning bustle. Nearing his home, he followed the line of familiar streets, trying to realize that he would never again traverse them in the flesh.

He heard the babble of voices from below, but paid no attention till he heard, mentally, the cry of a newsboy: "Extra! Read all about the big explosion—"

Curiosity getting the better of him, Hall descended and, by hovering over the stand, was able to read the account.

**"GIANT ATOMIC-GUN EXPLODES!
FIVE KILLED!"**

Below, the account began:

"The huge atom-smasher with which Professor Eric Hall hoped to do amazing things, under the sponsorship of Universal Alloys, Inc., yesterday exploded, completely wrecking the laboratory. The noise could be heard for ten miles, and many windows at the south side of town were shattered by waves of concussion. Professor Hall, world renowned scientist, and his four assistants were instantly killed. Their bodies will be on view at the Deering Chapel at ten o'clock."

With mixed feelings, the professor left the stand and once more took up the journey.

As he saw his bungalow home approaching a strange nostalgia stabbed through him. It was only yesterday that he had stepped from that door. His wife had kissed him and admonished him to "be careful with that big machine." His three children had waved to him from the upstairs window, faces pressed against the pane.

They always tumbled out of bed to see him go, though it was early when he left that morning.

He circled the house slowly.

At last an open window offered entry. He found the rooms still and tomb-like. In the parlor he came upon a group of relatives seated in chairs and divans, conversing in whispers. They had long faces, though many were not genuine. Hall heard himself discussed and praised highly. Yet many of these people had always considered him a stuffy, dingy, uncompanionable sort of person; that he knew.

Then in the corner he saw his three children, sitting very stiff and straight, a little bewildered. Their eyes were red from recent tears. With a soundless cry, Professor Hall moved toward them.

Then he stopped, abruptly remembering.

It was *him* they were mourning! He was dead, to them. He could not kiss those chubby little faces, or tiddle them on his knees any more. He hovered over them for a while, and though he could not shed tears, he was weeping.

The group became restless. Eyes were glancing furtively about.

"I—I have a strange feeling that Eric is in this room with us!" said one, shivering a bit. Others nodded their heads. Some of them looked straight at the globe of Professor Hall, but apparently could not make out its dim outline in the darkened room. The smallest of the three children, however, suddenly cried out, "Daddy!"

It was looking directly at the globe.

Feeling like a lost soul, Professor Hall hastily left the room. They would not understand if he talked to them by telepathy and told the story. He floated toward the back of the house,

down the hall past the kitchen to the bedroom that had been his and his wife's. Here he found the door almost closed. From beyond came the sound of heartbroken sobbing.

Professor Hall experimentally willed his globe-shape to flatten out. It did. He slipped into the room as a large flattened disk no more than an inch thick, and on the other side of the door he once again assumed the spherical form.

He found his wife lying face down on the bed, tears flowing steadily. He hovered over her for a minute, thinking of the happy married life they had had for so many years. Involuntarily, he cried out to her, from within himself.

The woman on the bed choked on a sob and turned slowly around. Her attitude became alert. She held her breath as though listening, and sat up.

"Eric!" she said softly, puzzled, but not frightened. "Eric, are you here? I seem to feel you near me!"

For a moment, he had a strong temptation to talk to her by telepathy, and try to comfort her. But he conquered it. It would do no good, he reasoned, and might make her hysterical. It was better for her to think of him as dead than to know that he was some sort of undead wraith wandering over the world. With an effort of will that was anguish, he tore himself away, slipped through the door, and left the house by the same window he had entered.

He willed himself high into the air and then halted, thinking.

How ironic it all was! He wasn't really dead, and yet to those people and to all the world he was. They would bury his body and come to forget him. All the while he would be as alive as they, but only as a bodiless, thinking entity. Then a strange thought struck him—when would he

die? It was a question for which he knew no scientific answer. He hoped it was soon. He dreaded looking into an empty future. . . .

AT noon, Professor Hall was waiting above the ruins of the laboratory. At last Dr. Kard showed up, approaching slowly. Hall immediately sensed that he was nervous, shaken. Incoherent thoughts seemed to emanate from him, as though he had gone through some unnerving experience.

Kard's greetings were a poor attempt at nonchalance.

"What is it, Kard? Something has shaken you—what happened?"

"Oh, nothing." But his mental agitation finally got the better of him and Kard burst out in rapid psychicspeech. "I may as well tell you. I had meant to keep it from you, Hall, but I swear it was accidental. I—I just killed a man—my brother!"

"Tell me about it," said the professor quietly, though it startled him no little.

"Well, I went to my brother's home, where I had lived with him and his family for the last five years, you know. I found him alone in a room, preparing my insurance policy so that he could turn it in and collect.

He was my closest living relative and therefore my beneficiary.

"That part was all right. But as I hovered over him, I read his thoughts, which is a power you know we have. There never was much love lost between us, I'll admit, but the cold-blooded way he thought of my death—well, I distinctly heard him think that he was glad the 'skinflint grouch was dead!' He went on to remind himself that we had always argued over money matters, politics, and everything else—not one solitary regret, mind you, that his brother was gone!

"I tell you, Hall, I just began boil-

ing over. I gave him a chance to think better thoughts of me, but in all that fifteen minutes I waited, it was only the meanest things he could dig out of his memory. He called me overbearing, stubborn, conceited and all such things. In his unconcealed mind—little knowing I was there reading it—he told himself over and over it was a fine thing that I had been killed. And he gloated—he positively gloated—over the money he was getting from the insurance company!”

Kard's psychic-voice trembled in rage even now. Then he went on reluctantly.

“You see that I had provocation enough, Hall, to want to—to kill him? And yet, I didn't really want to. I don't know exactly what happened. All I know clearly is that I was very, very angry and rushed at him, forgetting that I was just an intangible globe. I think my object was to put my fingers around his throat and choke him for a while. Only I had no fingers.

“Well, my globe touched him while I was in this violent fit of anger. I rebounded a bit. Then suddenly a huge flash of electricity struck him. It seemed to come from me! The next moment my brother's body lay on the floor—charred, lifeless! I stared for a moment, dazed at what had happened. But when the door opened and his wife came in to investigate the strange noises she had heard, I fled.

“After that I went high into the air and sort of paced up and down on a cloud. Of course, such a thing is bound to shake a person. I realized I had killed my brother and was sorry. But now—”

Dr. Kard's mental attitude suddenly became cheerful, as if telling the story to the professor had given him relief. “But now, somehow, I'm not—”

Then, abruptly, Kard cut off his

thoughts. “What's done is done,” he finished non-committally.

“Too bad,” commented the professor, shocked at what he had heard. “But it's not really your fault. I'm sure you had no premeditated thought of harm toward your brother, so morally you aren't guilty. You—”

“Let's not discuss the ethics of it,” muttered Kard half frigidly. “The thing is—how do you figure it out scientifically, his death at my contact?”

Professor Hall thought silently for a while. When he spoke, the tone of his psychic-voice was grave.

“Kard, we are possessors of great power, though we are not fully aware of it yet. Think once. We are globes of electrons—quintillions upon quintillions of them, poured into us by the most powerful electrical current ever produced by man. We represent a force capable of smashing atoms apart, if we weren't definitely bound into a patterned arrangement exactly similar to that of the human mind. This arrangement only allows the forces to be vented in the usual tiny amounts necessary for our thinking processes, except—”

He paused, thinking his way along.

“Except when we wish to see, move, telepathize and other things. For instance, when we will ourselves to see, a certain number of our outer surface-electrons disintegrate themselves into photons of light-radiation which mirror the outside world. When we move, electrons again change to photons—on the appropriate side of our globes—and push us along by the well-known principle of radiation-pressure. We are so ineffably light, in physical mass, that the back-kick of this radiation is enough to waft us along. When we telepathize, again surface-electrons disintegrate and convey the message along beams of radiation.”

"And in the case of my brother's death," interposed Kard, "my surface-electrons simply jumped over to him—electrocuting him?"

"It is all mind control, most of it purely reflexive," summarized the professor. "Your brother was killed only because you were angry with him. You *willed* to kill him. The rest was purely reflexive. The surface-electrons, so remarkably responsive to our mental commands, did their part without hesitation. Of course, you didn't *know* that your very thought would be the act itself."

HIS voice became graver. "We will have to be careful in the future, Kard. We are as potentially dangerous as a million intelligent lightning flashes. Or, to put it another way, we are intelligent power!"

"Power!" repeated Kard. In life, he had always dreamed of having fame and money, the latter because money was power. But here he had no need of money. He had power without that. And as for fame, recognition, that too, perhaps, was within his grasp!

"What are you thinking, Kard?" asked the professor sharply.

Kard countered with another question. "How long do you think we'll—live?"

"Probably a long time. We aren't bound by mortal rules of life and death, that's a sure thing."

"Maybe we're—immortal!"

Hall gasped, mentally. "I hadn't thought of that. Lord, if that were so—well, we'd have to make the best of it."

"And now, professor, we come to the most important thing of all—*just what are we going to do in this new life?*"

Kard asked the question with men-

tal reservations. Certain decisions were already forming in his mind, secretly. But he waited curiously to hear his companion's answer.

"Yes, that's a poser," confessed Hall. "I've been subconsciously wrestling with that problem from the first. As I've said before, we can't break entirely the ties of our former life. We will have to find some way to make contact with the living world. Naturally, it will be for the purpose of benefiting it. Perhaps we can carry on our work as scientists. We might establish ourselves as mental advisers to some scientist."

Kard smiled within himself and thought, "Just as I expected. The man has *power* within his grasp, and he talks of helping some stoop-shouldered wretch fiddling with his gadgets!" Then he transmitted, "Sort of ghost-scientists, eh?"

"However, we must not rush into it," continued Hall thoughtfully. "We must take time to become thoroughly adjusted to our new state, and also think out our plans carefully. I suggest we see our funeral first, day after tomorrow. I think we'll get some sort of esoteric thrill out of seeing our mortal flesh laid away!"

They agreed on that, and for the rest of that afternoon wandered aimlessly over the city and surrounding countryside.

It became a little amusing to them to see automobiles crawling over roads, transporting humans with such elaborate expenditure of apparatus and energy. All *they* had to do was wish or think themselves some place! And those bodies they had been without now for over a day—how clumsy they had been, how trying and full of pains, appetites, and biological handicaps. How free their minds were now! How splendid it felt to just drift along in the breeze like a bird, unknowing

of the cares and woes of mortal existence!

"It's a blessing, after all, to be like this!" caroled Dr. Kard as his globe-shape pirouetted in the air with avian grace.

"I think I'll be satisfied!" agreed Professor Hall. "The care of the body was such a nuisance. No more overcoats to wear in winter, when it's cold, nor galoshes when it rains. No more indigestion, headaches, or rheumatism!"

When dusk came, they shot themselves to the stratosphere with its Arcadian peacefulness, and went to sleep. The clouds below were their blankets, the star-strewn sky above their roof.

Up at dawn the next day, they decided to make some experiments with their new range of locomotion. They soared higher and higher, from the stratosphere to the ionosphere, till the stars began to appear in the sky with the sun. Earth below began to assume its true spherical shape. Professor Hall called a halt at what he estimated was a height of a hundred miles.

"Here we are, higher than man has ever gone before!"

Both of them were thinking the same thing. Kard phrased it as a question. "What could stop us from going on—through space to other planets?"

"Nothing," Hall replied readily. "Our method of propulsion would work in space as well as in air. It's Newton's Third Law of reactive forces, like rockets, and would work anywhere in the universe. In fact, out in space, with no air resistance to bother us, we could undoubtedly achieve tremendous speeds. But—"

Somehow, they were not prepared for it yet. They drew back from the edge of the void, strangely appalled. They were still humans, with humans' feelings and misgivings, and could

not just suddenly think of leaving the world of their birth to soar into interplanetary depths.

For the rest of the day they gambled in the stratosphere, strangely exhilarated by their new freedom. They found that they could achieve miraculous speeds and acceleration by the mere effort of wishing it, even in air. They began to feel at one with the universe. They went to sleep that night bathed in clear, silvery moonlight, two sentient electron-globes with an unknown future before them.

CHAPTER THREE

BATTLE OF THE SPHERES

THE day of the funeral dawned hot and humid—but it meant nothing to the two disembodied entities hovering over the chapel, though they could see the perspiration rolling from people's faces.

They slipped in, poised over the biers, viewing for the last time what had once been their bodies. The embalmer had skilfully painted the charred skin white and remolded the crushed faces to a semblance of their former appearance.

The two invisible scientists gazed down with a curiously impersonal feeling. In the past three days, they had become so used to their bodiless existence that it would probably have felt strange to once again be clothed in flesh.

Then they went out again. Professor Hall resolutely avoided going into the chapel for the last services, knowing that his widow would break down, and he didn't want to see that. Later, they followed the winding procession of funeral cars to the cemetery, saw their coffins laid away, and a last prayer said for their souls.

"That's that!" sighed Professor Hall, as he followed the limousine car-

rying his sobbing wife and children back toward their home.

"That breaks the last physical tie to our former lives," said Kard. "Now we can plan new careers for ourselves. Let's get away from these depressing things." He seemed impatient to be away.

But Hall insisted on seeing his former home once more. After he had watched the sad scene of his family entering the home which was no longer his, he said, "All right, Kard. We'll go now."

They started up, but Hall, hearing the telepathic cry of a newsboy, stopped suddenly. He went to the corner stand and read the headlines and subtitles.

"President of Universal Alloys, Inc., and Two Other Men Found Dead in Their Homes, Apparently by Electrocution! Investigation begun by electric utility company—"

Dumbfounded, the professor wafted up to his waiting companion.

"Kard, what have you done?" he accused angrily. "Why did you kill those men?"

"I hated them," retorted Kard calmly. "Old Prexy never did give me the proper promotions or remunerations. The other two were old enemies of mine. Purely personal matters, Hall. No business of yours!"

"You sneaked away last night while I was asleep to do this cowardly thing. You're a deliberate—murderer!"

"Am I?" mocked Kard. "Why don't you turn me over to the police, so they can *electrocute* me?"

"But you can't go on like this!" raged the professor. "You're toying with a new-found power and it'll lead you to ruin. What devilish plans have you in your mind, Kard?"

Kard veiled his true thoughts.

"Oh, don't take it so seriously, Hall.

I'm still human. I hated them and evened a score of long standing."

Professor Hall, with his first towering anger and horror over, realized it would do no good to lecture or appeal to Kard's conscience. Kard's character was of the type that considered nothing a crime for which there was no punishment. And he could not be punished by Earthly authorities.

"Listen, Kard," said the professor slowly and forcefully. "I'll give you a chance to think it over and realize your mistake. There must be no repetition of such things. They can't punish you down on Earth, no. But one more slip and you'll answer to *me*!"

Within himself Kard sneered. But he did not have courage enough yet to openly defy the professor, who was the only one he had to fear now, in the whole world. And to what extent he had to fear his companion, Kard did not know.

The rest of that day they did not speak much to each other. They hovered in the stratosphere aimlessly, pondering individually the strange new life before them.

"Tomorrow," said Professor Hall, "we will make plans."

"Yes—tomorrow!" returned Kard, with cryptic meaning.

From their perch could be seen, far below, the toy-like structures of the Niagara power plant, with its millions of watts of electrical output.

"Power!" Kard thought to himself. "It is there!"

THE next morning, after sleeping in the stratosphere, Professor Hall woke to find Kard gone!

At first hardly caring, Hall then thought of the killings Kard had done with so little compunction, and became alarmed. Without anyone to check him, what might not the ruthless scientist do?

Hall began thinking deeply. What would Kard do first? What were his plans? Of these Hall knew nothing. Kard had cleverly concealed the workings of his mind. Hall debated the best course and finally made up his mind.

He perched himself high in the stratosphere and waited.

Once a day he descended to the world of men, to look over newspapers. If Kard had made any diabolical plans, they would manifest themselves sooner or later in the world's news. Thus he waited for five days.

While he waited, he thought. The results of his deep, scientific introspection amazed him. For the first time, he realized his mind could reason with a new clarity. All the scientific lore he had amassed in the past years, a good deal of it contradictory, came to the fore and neatly fitted itself together, like a jig-saw puzzle completed. He began to make new deductions and conclusions. More and more of the true pattern of the universe became revealed in his mind. Important scientific principles that mankind didn't know of trembled at the verge of his thoughts. If he could make use of a laboratory and carry on experimental work, to confirm theories that were welling in his mind. . . .

But first he must take care of the matter of Dr. Kard. On the sixth descent to Earth, headlines struck him like a blow in the face:

"Mysterious Menace Strikes Washington! Twelve prominent business and government leaders dead! In each case, the victim was killed while among a group of friends. A lightning flash struck, seemingly from nowhere, causing instant electrocution. Eyewitnesses swear that a mysterious 'silent' voice announced, after each killing, that it would not be the last by the 'Power King'. Officials fear it may be the act of some foreign

power which has discovered a new weapon—"

"He's gone berserk!" moaned Professor Hall to himself.

He went to Washington, where all the deaths had occurred and raced over that city in a frenzy, searching for Kard, calling him in a long-range telepathic voice. At last Kard answered, and Hall shot in his direction.

"Kard, you had your chance and threw it away," radiated the professor's powerful telepathic voice. "I said you'd answer to me. I'm coming after you now!"

"I'll meet you half way, Hall!" came back Kard's psychic-voice defiantly. "I'm ready for you!"

A few minutes later they had come within sight of each other, high in the stratosphere. Hall immediately noticed that the globe of Dr. Kard was nearly twice as big in diameter as formerly. They halted ten feet apart.

"How I've missed you, professor!" greeted Kard mockingly.

"Come to the point!" snapped Hall. "What is your campaign of murder all about?"

"It's obvious. I'm instituting a reign of terror in this country. A long series of deaths will finally convince them that they are dealing with a great power!"

"Just as I thought," sighed the professor. "In your former life, you were always greedily reaching for all you could get. You would have ousted me as chief of research if you could have. But old Prexy prevented it, and for that he died. Now, because you feel the world never gave you your just deserts, you are going to try to tyrannize over it. Well, I'm here to stop you!"

"Indeed!" laughed Kard. "Have you noticed that I'm twice my former diameter?—that means eight times my former volume. I went to the Ni-

agara power plant and for one full day absorbed most of its output of current—just let it run into me like water into a jar. I have eight times as many surface-electrons as you have, Hall, eight times as much *power*! You are the only thing on earth that could possibly disrupt my plans, so I'll destroy you—*now!*"

TWO things happened almost simultaneously.

The biggest and brightest lightning flash ever seen in earth's skies flamed from the globe of Dr. Kard. The globe of Professor Hall began instantaneously to rotate at a stupendous rate. Countless quintillions of electrons, at the blasting pressure of one billion volts, leaped jaggedly across the intervening space, a force that would have toppled a mountain.

The rapidly spinning globe of Professor Hall reeled back at the impact of the ravening bolt. It stunned him completely for a moment. He felt as though he had collided with a stone wall at the speed of light. Then he recovered.

"You see, Kard," he said quietly, "a *spinning* group of electrons creates a powerful magnetic field, which can turn other electrons aside. Your discharge, which would otherwise have blasted into my interior, simply took up a circular path around me. Now that discharged group of electrons is mine!"

Dumbfounded at his failure, Kard spat icily: "I'll get you yet. Stop *this* one!"

Again the air was rent by the passage of super-lightning, twice as powerful as the first bolt. But again Professor Hall's globe was spinning, like an ectoplasmic top, and again the titanic discharge simply distributed itself around his globe, harmlessly.

Now driven by a desperate fear and rage, Kard released bolt after bolt,

each mightier than the last. Each time he did so, his globe became smaller, and Hall's larger.

Down below on Earth, the people of the surrounding region heard the most frightful thunders the world had ever known, and grew afraid at this sudden storm that had arisen. Their eyes were blinded by the brilliant flashes of light that stabbed down from the sky. Blast after blast of ground-shaking thunder deafened human ears, and flash after flash of supernal radiance bathed the countryside in a ghastly blue light. Seismographs half way around the world recorded the disturbance. What inconceivable forces were being unleashed up in the sky? No one knew.

Up above, the furious eruption of electron bolts from Dr. Kard's globe finally ceased. Professor Hall's globe, adding to itself, was now as large as Kard's diminished one.

"You've failed, Kard!" the professor announced ominously.

Kard smothered his incoherent rage. "I see that. But anyway, I can go on with my plans. If I can't destroy you, you can't destroy me!"

"You forget one thing," returned Hall in a deadly tone. "It is *will* that rules you and me—our own wills. It is the only thing that holds our globes together. And that is the only way to finish this battle that must be finished. You wish to rule mankind, I to benefit it. Whichever of us has the stronger will can blast the other's will out of its electron-shell into the true death. Dr. Kard, I *will* you to die!"

A new force sprang between the two globes hovering in the air, a subtle force that warped and strained the ether around them as though it were pliant rubber. Down below, man-made instruments went awry, unable to record properly a phenomenon that sent mighty ripples through the ether.

A great fear jabbed into Dr. Kard. He seemed to feel himself shrinking and withering, though he resisted with all the power of his mentality. He felt as though his interior were being slowly disintegrated by some strange poison. An inexorable will-voice chanted a deadly refrain of: "Die! Die! Die!" It probed within his vitals and began to rip apart the pattern that was the soul and mind of Dr. Kard.

At last a wild cry burst from his innermost being, and with a terrific effort, Kard broke from the spell and fled. Up and up he went, higher in the stratosphere. Panic gripped him with icy fingers as he saw the globe of Professor Hall following relentlessly, like a self-appointed Nemesis.

Kard put on added speed at a reckless rate and dived and twisted in the hope of shaking his pursuer, but always the other globe was right behind. In desperation he formed himself into a long, thin, pointed cylinder and dove down into the heavier strata of air, at a speed never matched by Man's aircraft. But when he slowed, all but ripped apart by air-pressure, there was Hall not twenty feet away.

"You can't escape me," came the professor's deadly psychic-voice. "I'll chase you to the ends of the universe, if need be!"

Screaming in mortal fear, Kard drove his glove upward at a break-neck pace. Up and up he went till Earth lay as a large, blue orb and all the air was gone. Perhaps in the darkness of space he might lose his pursuer. On and on the two globes sped, attaining prodigious velocity, with only the stars watching.

DR. KARD knew he must not stop.

The moment he did, and allowed Professor Hall to come close, there would again be the battle of wills, and

Kard knew with a terrifying certainty that his will was weaker than his companion's. Professor Hall's strong will-radiation, which was a strange new force fed by electronic energy, would disorganize Kard's inner electron pattern and scatter him as unthinking electron debris.

Dr. Kard did not want to die. He catapulted on into space, driven by this most ancient fear of Man's.

There was no limit to their velocity in airless space. Like ghostly rocket ships they sped on, accelerating at a rate that would have crushed their mortal bodies. Long streamers of fluorescent radiance shot backward, propelling them forward by simple, direct reaction. At times the globe of Professor Hall would relentlessly crawl closer and Dr. Kard would put on an added burst of speed, though the steady hammering of the reactive forces was already beginning to hurt in a dull way.

Almost before they knew it, the moon loomed large.

Kard had blindly set a course for it. Soon the Lunar whiteness filled all the firmament and Kard realized that he would crash with all the force of a solid body, because of his tremendous velocity.

Frantically, almost forgetting his grim pursuer, Kard threw a retarding radiation from the front and side, decelerating and turning past the moon. Professor Hall, realizing the same danger, did likewise.

Though decelerating furiously, they swept over the moon and past it. Kard now began turning the other way, inspired by an idea. If he could get down to the moon's surface, how easy it would be to hide from Hall in some of the ultra-black shadows of the airless satellite.

It was at this point that both of them became aware of a feeling of in-

tense fatigue. Their globe-shapes had now shrunk to smaller dimensions than they had ever been. Realization of what it meant swept all thought of mutual enmity out of their minds.

They were in danger of being marooned in space!

Their mad speed and the long journey to the moon had used up most of their surface-electrons. Soon they would have none left. They would have only the central core of electrons, which they could not utilize without disintegrating their very beings.

"If we get stuck out here without surface-electrons," radiated Professor Hall, "we'll drift in space!"

Promptly, obeying the instinct of self-preservation ahead of all other considerations, they used their remaining energies to decelerate their furious plunge into the yawning regions beyond the moon. The satellite's disk back of them shrunk steadily, from their still-high velocity, but more and more slowly. They used the last few millions of their surface-electrons for retarding, looking back anxiously.

The disk of the moon had stopped dwindling! In fact, it began slowly enlarging in the next few minutes. Their last, desperate splurge of energy had stopped their outward motion and given them a slight impetus back toward the moon. They were saved, at least, from the terrors of isolation in the void, though Professor Hall began to wonder what they would do on the moon.

CHAPTER FOUR

POWER FROM THE MOON

IT took a full week, Earth time, to get back to the moon at the slow pace that they could not increase in the slightest.

They arrived in a state comparable to starved, parched men who had staggered over a hot desert for countless miles. They could barely see, and to telepathize was out of the question, for they had no spare surface-electrons for the purpose.

Side by side, they landed on the peak of a tremendous jagged mountain which had no earthly name, for Earth had never seen it. It was the enigmatic Other Side of the moon, never before viewed by human eyes or mind. They felt no slightest thrill in the thought—no more than a doomed desert traveler would have over seeing an undiscovered monument.

They lay on the hard, crystalline rock, wondering when death would come. There seemed no hope of gaining a supply of the electrons which alone could give them life. There could be no lightning storms on the dead moon to replenish them, as on Earth. They were no better off than mortal space-travellers, marooned beside a wrecked space-ship.

"This is the end—for both of us!" telepathized Professor Hall weakly, though the few thought-words seemed to pluck energy from his very mind. "Perhaps it is better so. At least you can no longer plague Earth with—"

He stopped, exhausted.

"I was a fool!" said Kard earnestly. "I—"

But, he, too, could not go on, and the two of them felt a slow, smothering cloud settle over their non-material minds. Perhaps their central patterns of electrons were slowly breaking up, under the impact of cosmic rays.

How many long hours they lay there in a heavy stupor, looking over the weird Lunar landscape, they did not know. But finally Professor Hall stirred. Strangely, a current of strength seemed to be rising within

him. It came from the lower part of his globe, which rested on the unweathered rock. His vision began clearing and he felt faintly that sensation so closely analogous to physical "eating."

"By the way, Hall," came Kard's psychic-voice suddenly, stronger than it had before, "do you feel as though—you were regaining energy?"

"Yes! And we are!" Hall went on jubilantly. "We're resting on matter, and all matter contains electrons. Our 'starving' globes have simply, and quite automatically, absorbed free electrons from the rock itself—stripped them away, probably, from the outer shells of atoms. All we have to do is move slowly over this rock surface and absorb more!"

They tried it and found themselves gaining energy slowly but steadily. Soon, by common consent, they were rolling down the mountainside, increasing their bulk like rolling snowballs. Then they skipped over a jumbled patch of sharp rocks and again rolled themselves over the surface of a wide, smooth valley.

On and on they went, skirting craters and rough areas, till their globes had grown to a size even greater than when leaving earth.

Finally they stopped, wafted to the tip of a huge mountain, and prepared to take-off for Earth. They had had enough of the moon and its lifeless monotony of blinding sunlight and dense shadow.

They swept up with powerful blasts from their newly acquired stock of surface-electrons, circled half the moon, and headed for the large, blue globe of Earth swimming among the bright stars. On the more leisurely return trip, they had a chance to admire the beauty of their home planet, and of the sun with its halo of writhing crimsons and yellows.

But one thing was uppermost in Hall's mind.

"Kard," he said firmly, "I chased you to the moon for the express purpose of killing you, for your misdeeds on Earth. Circumstances intervened. However, I'm hoping you meant what you said before."

"I was a fool, as I said," returned Kard contritely. "I won't try that sort of thing again, Hall. While I faced death back there on the moon, I suddenly saw what folly I'd done. I'm sorry for the deaths I caused, but there will be no more at my hands. I swear it!"

Kard was serious for the time being. Yet, though neither of them mentioned it, they both knew that the main reason Kard had given up all thought of continuing his campaign for personal power, was because he knew that Professor Hall held the power of life and death over him. He had not known it before, but now there was no doubt. Next time, Kard might not escape Hall's vengeance.

ONCE more drifting in the stratosphere of earth, Professor Hall called a halt and spoke thoughtfully.

"Kard, I've been thinking," he said slowly. "I'm still wondering why we weren't killed, at the explosion."

"Who knows?" returned Kard, surprised at the reopening of the topic. "We're alive, that's all that counts."

"Yes, but the question is, are we *alone* in this state? I've had a subtle feeling that there are *other* minds existing as we do!"

"Impossible!" exclaimed Kard. "We're alive through the greatest freak chance of all time. Somehow, a billion volts failed to kill us, completely. But we can't be metaphysicists and believe that the mind is always freed by the disruption of high voltages. In that case, capital punishment

by the electric chair would simply have released thousands of criminal minds into this same existence—and the minds of people killed by lightning!”

“Well, how do we know those minds, criminal and otherwise, *aren't* in this state?”

“Rot!” stated Kard flatly. “Imagination. We are alone in this existence—”

“Dat’s what youse t’ink!”

This new mental voice, coming from nearby, startled them. They instinctively jerked away a few feet.

The new voice went on: “I don’t know what kind of talk youse guys was using, but you’re wrong about being alone up here, ’cause here I am. Just happened to drift up and see you. You’re a couple of sine-tists, eh? What did they cook you for—Thanks-giving?”

“Who are you?” gasped Kard. “You can’t exist! It’s—it’s impossible!”

“Listen here, Einstein,” returned the newcomer, “I’m as good an exister as you are, so pipe down. My moniker’s Joe Stack. Call me Limpy. The laugh is, I don’t limp no more. Anyhow, the state of New Joisey put me in the hot-seat about five-ten years ago, for manslaughter. I killed a woman. I should of been fried, according to Hoyle, but I’ll be damned if I’m dead. Course, I ain’t got no body—”

His voice had become curiously crestfallen. The two scientists now noticed his globe-shape, just like theirs, though smaller.

“Amazing!” Professor Hall murmured. “Mr.—uh—Limpy, do you realize just *what* state of being you are in?”

“Well, I’m a little bettern’ a ghost, I think. I’m just like I was before, in my mind I mean. But it ain’t funny. I see without lamps, I hear without ears, I talk without having no mug,

and I move without legs. But I’m still *me* and nobody can tell me different. Sometimes it’s kind of spooky to think about it, but I don’t do no thinking about it. That’s the best way, take it from me, pals. You’ll get used to it and kind of get to liking it, even.”

“Thanks,” said Hall, smiling to himself. “But what do you do to occupy yourself? Five or ten years! How have you passed the time?”

“What is this, a cross-examination? But that’s the rub—killing time. Well, I used to go down below a lot and mosey around. Read newspapers and took in movies—all free, which ain’t bad. Then I went all over the country, sort of traveling in style, and there ain’t much in the line of scenery I ain’t seen. But I got tired of that. Lately, since I met the boys, I been spending a lot of time with them, talking over old times—”

Kard interrupted. “There are others of you?”

“Sure! Plenty more. Here comes my gang now, a swell bunch, all from Sing-Sing, where I did a stretch once.” His psychic-voice raised in a bellow. “Hey, you lugs! Come here a minute. I want youse to meet a couple of new punks from down below.”

A moment later the two scientists were surrounded by a dozen globe-shapes like themselves. “Boys,” said Limpy, “meet—hey, what’s your names, anyway?”

Professor Hall introduced himself and Kard, and then Limpy rattled off a series of names that ranged from Snakebite Pete to Cocaine Charley. A confused chorus of greetings came from the newcomers: “Howdy!” “Shake!” “Have a drink!” etc., in various degrees of sarcasm.

Limpy again spoke when the rest had quieted down.

“Me and the boys was heading down for a little fun. We’re going to pull off

a jailbreak at San Quentin. Want to join us? Oh, I forgot you're new up here. You see, now and then we mixes in with things down below, for the hell of it. We'll find out the lay of things, being as we're invisible, and plan a jailbreak for the boys, and then give 'em the info. Sometimes the boys is superstitious and won't play ball, but generally they does, thinking it's themselves that is so brainy. It's always a lot of fun, especially when two-three guards get plugged. Bank-robbing is great stuff, too; we did one last week. Got thirty grand and killed two lousy coppers. That is, not us, but the guys we help; we kind of feel it's us, you know. Want to join this jailbreak with us?"

"No—uh, thanks," returned Hall. "If you don't mind, we'll just stay here."

"Okay with us," said Limpy laconically. "Be seeing ya. Come on, gang, let's get going!"

With whoops and yells, the globes moved off rapidly, heading downward.

CHAPTER FIVE

FORCES DIVIDED

FOR a minute there was silence between the two globes left alone. Then Professor Hall spoke. "We're not alone after all in this existence! You know, I think this may account for the great prevalence of crime in the last decade. America sends criminals to death by the electric-chair where most countries hang them. Obviously hundreds, perhaps thousands of criminal minds live in this strange life and it is perhaps they who plan and instigate the many daring, bloody crimes this nation has been criticized for. Do you see, Dr. Kard?"

"I beg your pardon," said the other globe in a voice that was not Kard's.

"The Dr. Kard whom you address has gone with the group that just left."

"Wh—who are you?" gasped Professor Hall, bewilderedly. "And where did you come from?"

"I was with the group, though I have nothing in common with them. Now and then I become so lonely and frightened that any sort of companionship—" He broke off, started over. "But again your pardon. I am Dr. Valmir Rumanov, late of the University of Moscow."

"Dr. Valmir Rumanov!" echoed Hall dazedly. "Why I—I know you. At least I met you about five years ago, during a tour of European universities. You were the foremost atom-smasher at that time. I remember you were putting the finishing touches to a great atomic-gun, which—"

"Which, as you Americans would quaintly express it, put the finishing touches to me, a year later. You undoubtedly read of my death in the newspapers, as I read of yours. I came here to search for you, but for a time it seemed you were not on earth."

"I wasn't, at that," chuckled Hall. "I was on the moon."

He told the whole story. "Dr. Kard and I were quite startled," he finished, "to find, a few minutes ago, that we are not alone in this existence. Is it possible that there are dozens, hundreds—"

"Thousands is more correct, professor," interposed Dr. Rumanov in a telepathic voice that had the same precise foreign accent he had had in life. "Every apparent death on earth by high-voltage electricity has produced an electronic entity such as ourselves. In the four years that I have lived in this neo-life, pondering the situation, I have seen the reason for it.

"Life and electricity are bound together. The body processes are electro-

chemical in nature. Mental processes are purely electrical. Evolution in the far, far future will produce a race of creatures as we are, when nature in its slow, blundering way has eventually found the means of dispensing with the electro-chemical body altogether."

"We represent mankind of a million years ahead?" Hall mused.

"Not exactly. We are accidental freaks. We cannot reproduce, for instance. The electron-creatures of the future will be able to."

"But perhaps we are—immortal!" Hall suggested.

"No again," responded Rumanov, with a curious note of exultance. "No, we aren't, and thank God for that. Immortality is a curse. I know there will be a death for us. I have seen others in this life die. They had lived as electronic entities at the most an earth lifetime—about sixty years. The electronic patterns of their minds are ultimately disintegrated by cosmic rays. In all the past ages, there have been many millions who were struck by lightning, and passed into this interlude between life and death. But they have long since died the true death. They account, of course, as a moment of thought will show, for most of the spiritist phenomena and tales of ghosts and such through mankind's history."

"Yes, I can see that," Hall agreed. "Any person hearing a strange telepathic voice talking to him from an almost invisible globe-shape would conclude it was a visitation from the after-death world—"

"Which it actually is!" laughed the Russian. "We *have* died an earthly death. But of course the mass of spirit tales are overlaid ridiculously with imaginative details."

"How many of our kind are there, now?"

"I have estimated about five thou-

sand, of which fully half are your American criminals sent to 'death' by the electric-chair. There are in the main just two classes—the criminals and the ordinary people struck by lightning. However, most people struck by lightning died of heart-failure from shock, and so did not enter this existence. Otherwise there would be unnumbered thousands. Over 2,000 people are annually killed by lightning, over all earth!"

"Are there no other scientists, like ourselves?"

"No others," sighed the Russian. "All other scientists who have been martyrs to atom-smashing research have died in normal ways—crushed or blown apart. Only you and I, and your Dr. Kard, were electrocuted. We are the only ones of the scientific fraternity in this strange life. Though I deplore your calamity, I welcome you to my side with great joy!"

HE sighed again. "You do not know, yet, Professor Hall, how slowly time drags itself by, like a lame snail, when you have nothing to do but think. No doubt it seems a wonderful thing to you at present. You are free, unoppressed, unhandicapped by the body, or by hidebound traditions. You will ponder the future of science. You will have great delight for a while observing man's civilization from this omniscient viewpoint. But when the months grow into years, an appalling boredom sets in. You feel so apart from it all.

"You will come to wish again for your body—to yearn for the base senses of feeling, taste, smell—for the patter of rain on your skin, the caress of a woman, the natural tiredness after a day's hard labor. All those things are denied us in this interlude. All one can do here is see civilization laid open like a book, and realize the

futility of it all. One sees too much of the cycle of things, the despair, misery, cruelty, the—"

Hall interrupted the almost frenzied speech of the other scientist. Secretly he pitied this man whose true Russian temperament saw only the futility of things.

"I must find Dr. Kard," Hall said. "As I've explained, he is an irresponsible character. I'll have to go to San Quentin and find out just what he has in mind. Coming along, Dr. Rumanov?"

The Russian accompanied him and the two globes wafted through the stratosphere at the rate of a thousand miles an hour.

"These criminals," asked Hall thoughtfully on the way, "are they organized? Are they the mythical 'brain' of organized crime in America?"

"Partially," acceded Rumanov. "Though not to a great extent. I have given the matter a good deal of attention. These few thousand criminal minds in our sphere of life are not the brainy type at all. Remember that your court processes seldom reach the true ringleaders in crime. The electric-chair has eliminated from earthly life only the actual doers of crime, the ones who pull triggers from orders higher up. Thus most of your criminals here are unintelligent. The mind, as we know, is not improved or changed by transition to this sphere. They are not organized, except that they band together in groups according to the penitentiaries they come from. They spend most of their time quarreling among themselves over nothing at all, and talking over their former criminal exploits. I've listened to many of them, without their knowledge of my presence. They are not intelligent enough to be a serious menace."

"But this San Quentin thing—"

"It is true," explained the Russian, "that they quite often are involved in the spectacular crimes. They have found out that they can establish partial telepathic intercourse with living criminals. Through them they have instigated, or at least furthered, many jailbreaks, bank robberies, kidnappings, etc. With their powers of seeing and hearing almost anything they wish, they are able to forestall the police and confound the authorities in general."

"Do they know of their power of death over living persons?" asked Professor Hall, suddenly thinking of Kard and his former exploits.

"They do not have such power," returned Rumanov. "At least, not in their present state. They are not potentials of millions of volts, such as you and I are. They were blasted into being by merely thousands of volts. Just as humans vary from strong to weak, so are we to them. They are smaller globes with far less surface-electrons. They know vaguely that lightning storms give them strength, but have never followed through the reasoning."

"Fortunately," commented Hall. He thought deeply for a moment. "But if they ever *were* organized, and strengthened—"

"You do not trust your Dr. Kard in the least?" asked the Russian.

"Not any further than I can move the world!" returned Hall worriedly.

FINALLY the two globes slowed their speed and descended toward the ground at the proper point and were soon hovering over the walls of San Quentin penitentiary. Armed guards patrolled the tops of the walls. Within the prison-yard several hundred hard-faced men in striped denim lock-stepped about the enclosure in compulsory drill.

"Where will we find the Sing-Sing graduates?" asked Hall.

"We will have to search the entire place for them," returned the Russian, descending toward the first of the prison buildings.

For the next hour, they wafted themselves down every corridor and peered in every cell, but there was no sign of the dozen electronic-globes they sought.

"They are not here at all," said Rumanov finally. "They must have changed their minds."

"Either that," murmured Hall, "or Dr. Kard—"

He said no more but rose high in the air and broadcast a powerful telepathic call for his former colleague. No answer came. After he had expended many surface-electrons in this useless quest, Hall gave it up. "Well," he said, shrugging mentally, "I won't worry about it. I've told Kard that if he once more tries murderous exploits on Earth, I'll destroy him through will-power, which is something he almost lacks. I don't think he'll dare try anything, knowing that."

"I agree with you," said Rumanov. "It is nothing to worry about. He will soon tire of the company of the Sing-Sing men and seek you again. He will find it very lonely by himself."

Again the Russian's mental radiations became tinged with the inherent sadness of his race. In the next three days that they were together, feeling a close kinship because of their common ground of science, they hovered where they were and had long conversations together. Ever and again, when the topic turned to philosophic channels, the Russian would work himself into an apathetic state of depression. Finally the professor turned on him in a small fury.

"Rumanov, you'll have to perk up!"

snapped Hall. "You've been wandering around like a sick calf for four years while you've been in this life, moaning of the futility of everything, without trying to do a thing about it. Evolution, striving, is the answer to futility! Life aims toward the goal of ultimate perfection, ultimate knowledge. Till that goal is reached—and it will take a long, long time—there is no futility. When that goal is reached, there will be time enough to talk of futility."

"Mainly, your mental state is from the boredom of idleness. There are many things to do in this life. You haven't even had the initiative to go to the moon, or to other planets. There may be other intelligences in the solar system, to study and contact. Right here on Earth it will be possible for us to further scientific progress. I'm not going to just drift around for the following years like a wailing ghost. I'm going to *do* things!"

There was silence for a moment, but when the Russian spoke, there was a peculiar uplift in his psychic voice.

"I have been mentally ill," he confessed. "Professor Hall, let me thank you for giving me a new philosophy. Hereafter there will be no talk of futility. You and I together will *do* things!"

"Good!" retorted Hall in friendly tones. "Our first move will be to establish contact with the living world in one way or another." His voice suddenly became worried again. "There's just one rub at present. If I only knew what Dr. Kard—"

IT was the next day, while they were eagerly discussing plans for contacting the living world, that Professor Hall knew they would have to postpone that event. They had descended to Earth because of Hall's premoni-

tion that something was wrong. Again, headline streamers across the newspapers made him gasp and shudder, and turn hot with mental anger.

"MAIL TRAIN WRECKED, ROBBED BY MASKED BANDITS!"

Certain items immediately pointed to Kard. The engineer's and fireman's bodies, recovered from the wreck, were black from electrocution, much to the wonder of the officials. The train had left the tracks, failing to slow down for a dangerous curve. A gang of a dozen masked men had emerged from a nearby forest right after the wreck, obviously aware that it was to occur at that lonely spot miles from any large city. The bandits had rifled the mail coach. Losses were estimated at a million dollars in registered mail and some fifteen lives of passengers.

"Dr. Kard!" moaned Professor Hall.

"Has this Dr. Kard," gasped Dr. Rumanov, "no regard for human life?"

"He was born without a conscience! In its place is only a ruthless greed for power." Hall's voice became a mental hiss. "I must find him. *This* time he will die!"

Under Hall's leadership, the two globes rose in the air. The professor had no clear idea how he would locate his enemy, except to broadcast a powerful, long-range telepathic call, but before he began, a call beat into his mind. It was Kard himself!

"Professor Hall!" the distant telepathic voice said. "No doubt you have by now heard or read of the train-wreck, and are looking for me. I am hovering over Boulder Dam, near which the wreck happened. There has to be a show-down between us, so I'll expect you within the hour. "Are you coming?"

"Kard, prepare yourself for death!" answered Hall grimly. "Come on, Rumanov."

"One moment," insisted the Russian. "Before we go, shouldn't we increase our stock of surface-electrons? You told me of your last bout, in which your enemy had tremendous advantage of you at first. It would do no harm this time to be prepared for him."

Though insanely impatient to be off, Hall realized the wisdom of this. "Where can we find a lightning storm?" he asked hurriedly.

"No need of that," replied the Russian. "There is a much simpler way. Come."

Dr. Rumanov's globe-shape led the way westward till the skies became thick with threatening clouds. Then he rose into the midst of them, closely followed by Hall.

"Simply roll yourself around the edges of the cloud masses," instructed the Russian. "That is where the electrons accumulate."

Professor Hall obeyed, and quickly felt the tide of new strength flowing into him. Like shepherds of the sky, they gathered electrons from the woolly clouds, thereby postponing an electrical storm for the regions below.

"Enough!" said Hall presently.

They rose high in the stratosphere, twenty miles above earth, and shot westward at a pace so great that for them the noon-day sun streaked back toward the eastern horizon. Soon the ramparts of Boulder Dam appeared below and they descended like striking eagles.

Kard answered when Hall sent out a call, and met him five miles in the air. His globe-shape was swollen to a diameter of five feet, showing he had gathered a tremendous quantity of surface-electrons. Hall tensed for an instantaneous spin to counteract a

bolt from Kard, if he should try that, and warned Rumanov.

Kard was not alone. With him were fully a hundred globe-shapes, all at least half as large as he was. They gathered back of Kard in a formless mass, silently, ominously.

"We meet again," began Kard grimly, "for a struggle to the finish. *This* time—" He cut off a note of exultation. "Meet the boys," he began anew. "A hundred men who acknowledge me their leader!"

"Gathered for what hellish purpose?" inquired Hall, curious even in his cold, deadly rage.

"Perhaps my plans will interest you," retorted Kard, "before you die. You recall, I left you to accompany Limpy and his Sing-Sing gang some days ago. They were going to play the silly game of jailbreaking, but I convinced them they were wasting time and opportunity. Through them, I contacted other gangs and gathered these hundred. I laid certain plans before them. They were skeptical, but I think not any longer, since this recent mail-coup.

"It was simple a—mere matter of planning. We contacted a gang on Earth and promised to wreck the train at a certain spot for them—and did. Both the gang on Earth, and my men here, look up to me now as the man—or the *brain*—they need to accomplish great things. Don't you, boys?"

A mixed telepathic chorus of cheers came from the hundred globes to the rear.

"And what does all this lead to?" asked Hall in mingled rage and disgust.

"To my original aim—rule of Earth!" retorted Kard blandly. "I don't care how I achieve it. That is my self-appointed destiny. There are over two thousand more like these

followers of mine, here in this super-life. I will soon organize them all under my leadership. I will teach them the powers they do not even know they have. I have already shown them how to add surface-electrons—we depleted the Boulder Dam power supply for a day. We will contact the underworld on Earth, organize them under our banner!"

Kard's psychic-voice had risen to an exalted pitch, with almost insane determination in it—yet Hall knew he wasn't insane. He was simply a cold, ruthless intelligence divorced of all ordinary human emotion, yet no more cruel in his desire for power than such mortals as Alexander, Caesar, and Napoleon had been. But he had more power than they, and Hall shuddered within himself.

"I'm here to stop you," said the professor in deadly earnest.

"If you can!" defied Kard.

"Yeah! If he can!" came an ominous chorus from the rear.

Limpy's voice came clearly from out of the mêlée. "Perfesser, you ain't a bad guy in some ways, but I think you're a dead turkey now!"

CHAPTER SIX

WORLD DANGER

BUT the professor heard nothing of these warnings. His anger had grown to fever pitch while he had listened to Kard's diabolical plans to plunder a world. Without a further word, he lashed out with the strange, subtle force whose core was purely *will*. The globe of Kard reeled a little, then whipped back with a similar force.

The two globes locked in this weird struggle, both disintegrating surface-electrons furiously to feed the will-energy. As before, Kard weakened be-

fore the more powerful onslaught of Hall.

"Die!" commanded the latter, with a force of will that would have blasted life from a dozen living men.

All this had happened in split seconds. Then Kard's voice screamed out: "Help me! Let him have it, boys!"

Hall suddenly felt as though a giant hand had grasped his brain and were squeezing it. He realized immediately what it was. Kard had taught the criminal gang behind him how to exert their wills, and though individually they were weak, as a group they were inconceivably powerful. The combined will-power of a hundred electronic-minds was beating at the professor, tearing at his mind, beating him back—

"Dr. Rumanov!" cried Hall.

The Russian had already projected his powerful will into the area, but it made little impression on the tidal wave of will-energy pouring from the enemy. It could not last much longer. In another moment, the two defending scientists would be shattered in a soundless explosion of aimless electrons. They would be dead!

"Hall!" gasped the Russian. "We must flee!"

His globe broke away and shot itself upward. Hall followed, and the two globes raced blindly away, to escape the doom so nearly upon them.

But the grim, mocking voice of Kard sounded just back of them: "You won't get away!"

It was the reverse of Hall's pursuit of Kard the last time, but behind Kard were his hundred henchmen, like a ravening pack of wolves. The two flying globes could not do anything but pursue a straight-line course and trust to speed. If they tried any aerial tricks of turning, the huge pack behind would quickly cut them off.

They blocked in all directions save straight ahead.

The end seemed inevitable. Eventually the two fleeing scientists would run out of surface-electrons with which to propel themselves. Kard and his followers, more richly supplied, would then surround them and perform the final act of ripping them to shreds.

Hall groaned to himself, not at his impending death, but at the thought of earth's fate in Kard's hands. Then, when least expected, salvation came.

OTHER globe-shapes suddenly loomed ahead, hundreds of them. Dr. Rumanov instantly saw their opportunity.

"Slow down!" he gasped to Hall. "Mingle with these globes. They won't be able to tell one from another."

Both globes braked their precipitous course and allowed themselves to drift among the thickest group of globes. Questions and exclamations were hurried back and forth among these globes, for they had seen the two approach at breakneck speed, but the two hiding scientists kept silent.

The horde of pursuers dashed up an instant later, also slowing their great pace, and the two groups became a *mêlée* of confusion. Kard's voice bellowed out finally, asking the newcomers where the two globes of the scientists were. A confused babble was his answer. Kard and his hundred globes flung themselves this way and that, searching. But it was useless, for all globes looked alike.

At last the two scientists heard Kard's voice, almost at their side, snarling in baffled rage, ordering his men together. After a moment, the criminal group separated itself from the others.

Kard's broadcast voice sounded.

"You've escaped for the moment,

Hall, but you will eventually have to face me!" Then the criminal group left.

"That's that!" said Hall with relief. "Who are these people, Rumanov?"

"A group of those whose mortal existence was ended by lightning," replied the Russian. "I have met such groups before. They band together for companionship."

"My brother!" gasped a voice just beside them.

"What?" asked Hall, eyeing the globe which had just spoken.

"That was my brother!" went on the stranger. "I'm Leon Kard. My brother came to visit me while I was alive on earth, and electrocuted me in anger. I hardly knew what it was all about, this strange life, till I met this group. Since then my one thought has been revenge! I've been waiting to meet him for weeks. That was his voice! I'm going after him, *now*—"

"Wait!" commanded Hall. "You couldn't accomplish anything alone. He can be destroyed, but only by a group. He and his criminal horde must be eradicated, or Earth will know a shambles bloodier and more horrible than any yet in history!"

Professor Hall raised the power of his psychic-voice and addressed the entire group. For an hour he talked, giving them the full story. The group of two hundred readily accepted his leadership and the task imposed on them, glad to have some purpose after years of aimless, ghost-like wandering and inactivity.

And when Hall heard the powerful telepathic broadcast of Kard and his gang, exhorting all the other criminal electron-entities to join them, he likewise had his group chorus out a broadcast call for all non-criminals to join his side. There was no globe-being in any corner of Earth who did

not hear both the messages and react accordingly. Those of foreign origin, who did not understand English, were yet able to sense the meaning.

On Earth, these super-powerful telepathic messages were also vaguely intercepted by sensitive minds, who wondered if they were dreaming some strange dream. Though it startled these mortals, they had no realization of its true import. They could not have imagined that up above Earth two armies were gathering whose battle would decide the immediate fate of the world of living men.

Hall's army gathered over Niagara. They straggled up in small and large groups in the next three days, some from halfway around the world. Hall found himself ably supplied with eager lieutenants no less impatient than himself to destroy Kard. Besides Leon Kard, there was Prexy, who in life had been their employer, and the two men Kard had electrocuted in his first murder exploit. Then there were the twelve prominent men whom Kard had murdered in his last exploit before Hall had chased him to the moon.

Grim, determined souls they were, all bearing a deep hatred for the man who had so wantonly taken them from mortal life and precipitated them into this bewildering existence. Like the ghosts of murdered victims, they awaited the time to avenge their murderer. They spoke so eloquently of Kard's evil nature to the hundreds of lightning-formed globe-beings, who had no personal grudge against Kard, that they too became eager to end his career.

Hall counted his forces when no more came in and found he had just over 3000, all told. Dr. Rumanov assured him that Kard could have but few more in his criminal horde. Hall then sent them down to various cities

he knew Kard would be lurking. He left behind him a trail of the blasted enemy, shattered by his strong will-force, whose touch was almost like the crash of a bomb. Then he was slowed by a massed group of adversaries who pumped lightning bolts in vain at his rapidly spinning globe. Momentarily he would stop spinning for a fraction of a second to send a bolt of will-force at them. One by one he picked them off, as a sharpshooter might pick off targets. But his sole, deadly purpose was to reach Kard—

The tide of battle, at first in favor of the more numerous criminal horde, quickly turned the other way. By the very nature of their dull-witted, unintelligent minds, the criminals were no match for the normal intelligences against which they were pitted. And the new recruits, of the criminal class, so recently taken from mortal life, were too bewildered to put up much resistance, and were blasted in great numbers.

When Hall did break through the "personal" guard that Kard had obviously put up for himself, the sight that met his "eyes" made him stop short. A dozen globe-shapes were surrounding one giant one. The latter was Kard, besieged by the minds whose mortal existence had been ended by him. Will-forces had leaped into play. For seconds the giant globe held out, and one by one the other globes burst into nothingness. Finally, only one globe remained opposing the giant one of Kard's. The ether writhed at their struggle.

"I am your murdered brother!" announced the smaller globe.

"Leon!" gasped the larger.

Even as Professor Hall leaped for-

ward to help his ally, both globes burst into supernal, blinding light. Dr. Kard was no more!

Hall poised there, telling himself this. He snapped to attention barely in time to spin and ward off a bolt from an enemy globe. Then he flung the full power of his will-force at the other.

Half incoherent words came to him just before the opposing globe puffed to formless light. "So long, perfesser! Guess you was a right guy after all! Put lilies on my grave—"

"Limpy!" muttered the scientist.

A MOMENT later, after blasting another of the enemy, a familiar voice came to him—Rumanov's.

"Victory for us, Hall! Barely a hundred of the enemy are left, and at least three hundred on our side. Shall we exterminate the criminals entirely?" He answered himself a second later. "Look—the remaining criminals are fleeing!"

The battle quickly broke up. The escaping criminal globes scattered in all directions. Some few of Hall's ranks pursued halfheartedly. The rest gathered in a group and "talked" excitedly among themselves about the glorious outcome.

Hall spoke to them collectively. "You have done well," he commended briefly. "Now go. Let there be peace in this life."

He called Dr. Rumanov and they rose high in the stratosphere.

"With Kard out of the way," said the latter, "we can carry out our plans."

"Yes," returned Hall quietly, looking down over the world of living men like a benign spirit.



to replenish themselves with surface-electrons from man-made electrical sources. There was no help for it, no time now to wait for lightning storms of dense, charged cloud-packs.

The power-houses in Chicago, St. Louis, Pittsburgh and other northern cities found great quantities of their electrical output draining away to some mysterious vanishment, but did not know that invisible, sentient globes were sitting at the power terminals, swelling larger and larger as they sucked in current. Niagara in particular noticed its gigantic output going to waste and eventually shut down to investigate. But by then Hall's army was supercharged.

There was no attempt between the two opposing forces to make a surprise attack or try any strategy. By the very nature of the thing, they knew it must be a prearranged battle, out in the open, and the stronger side would win. A week after they had parted, Hall and Kard again contacted each other and arranged to hold the battle over the plains of Kansas, since that was about midpoint between their positions.

ON the day appointed, Hall led his crusaders westward. All were large six-foot globes. A million potential lightning bolts moved quietly over the unsuspecting world of men. In aggregate, they represented a power that could have razed a dozen cities.

They reached Kansas and watched the approach of the opposing army. Hall gasped when he saw the size of it. There were easily ten thousand!

Dr. Rumanov, beside him, stammered: "Impossible! I cannot understand it. There haven't been that many American criminals executed in the electric-chair!"

Then Professor Hall knew.

"Kard stops at nothing!" he hissed. "He has simply, in the past week, had his men go to Earth and pick up recruits from the underworld. Do you understand? He has simply had thousands more criminals electrocuted to swell his ranks! He has probably emptied every penitentiary west of the Mississippi. They outnumber us over three to one!"

"No matter," came Leon Kard's tense mental-voice from just back of him. "*He will not escape me!*" And fifteen other men back of him were echoing the same thought.

The two clouds of globes halted before one another. Kard's voice hurtled across.

"A fight to the finish, Hall!"

"To the last electron!"

The two clouds moved together, mingled, became one. Jagged lightning bolts began to leap from globe to globe. Those which failed to neutralize them by a sudden spin, were shattered, marking the death of one of the globe-lives. If both escaped the charge, they locked wills, straining motionlessly, like tangled wrestlers. When a will-force won, its victim suddenly exploded with a blinding light, dissolving into unsentient radiation. Enemy knew enemy by the call of "Kard!" or "Hall!" when meeting. In a few minutes, half the combatants were no more.

The regions below, in a radius of a thousand miles, marveled at the sudden, stupendous electrical storm that had burst from a clear sky. Strange, hoarse mental voices and shrieks seemed to rain down from that incredible zone. Many thought the end of the world had come. No one knew what was in progress there above the clouds, nor would they have believed it if told.

Hall was first to penetrate toward the center of the enemy horde, where

Beings of the Ooze

By JOHN M. TAYLOR



Screaming, they glowed with a phosphorescent blue light!

Spence Burkly dared to enter the forbidden city of the ancient frog-men—dared to desecrate the sacred ground of Mount Dukai! From out of the past comes the awful vengeance of a race long dead—an unspeakable doom to those who would boldly disregard the Curse!

THE water synthesizer was ready at last. The great manifolds towering into the air, and the shed housing the compact atomic-powered machinery were in alien contrast to the landscape of tiny Japetus*

*Japetus is the eighth satellite of Saturn. An Earth-colony had years ago been established on Titan (largest moon of Saturn), but Japetus had not been explored until

and to the group of deserted little stone homes lying still as death on the other side of the dry lake bed.

"Well, Tom, all you have to do now is pull the switch." The tall, heavily built man turned to his son.

Jim Tarrant visited the uninviting little satellite and claimed it for the Earth government.

"It's wonderful, Tom." The third member of the party, a pretty, dark-haired young woman, exclaimed eagerly. "If your water synthesizer is really practical—and it's bound to be—just think of the dry, lifeless planets that can be made habitable."

"Only if they have enough hydrogen and oxygen to spare, June," he reminded her, smiling at her enthusiasm.

Tom Tarrant had perfected a method of combining the abundant hydrogen and oxygen of Japetus, and of controlling the explosion of the uniting atoms. Now he and his wife and father were going to live on the little planet and prove the practicability of his invention.

"There's just one thing that worries me." June's grey eyes were fixed thoughtfully on the silent village across the lake bed.

"What's that, honey?"

"Those houses over there. Where are the people? They can't just have disappeared!"

"I've been wondering about that myself," her husband admitted. "And how could they have existed here in the first place? If it never rains—"

"My guess is that it does rain here sometimes," his father replied. "There's *some* moisture on the planet, though most of it stays on the Darkside.* But periodically, especially here near the Twilight Zone, there is probably a rainy season. Maybe they migrate during the drouth."

"But didn't you see anyone while you were exploring?" June persisted.

"No. I saw several of these villages and one or two very ancient, ruined cities, but never any people. Of course," he reminded them, "I didn't explore the Darkside at all."

"Well, no use worrying about

them." Tom shrugged and started for the machine-shed entrance. "Let's get things going. This soil will need to be mellowed before it's fit for planting."

He went into the control panel and pulled the master switch. The atomic motors began their high, almost inaudible hum. The manifolds roared with the inrush of air; the muffled beat of myriad tiny explosions in the synthesizing chamber settled to a steady rhythm. Water poured into the storage tanks. Tom waited a moment, watching the pressure gauge; then he opened the outlet valves and rejoined the others. Silently the three stood waiting; water began to gush from the rows of sprinkler-pipes.

Nearly an hour later June, who had been walking around the edge of the lake bed, noticed that the muddy ground began to boil and stir.

"Tom! Dad!" she shouted. "There's an earthquake or something out here!" She started back toward the house, but stopped in petrified amazement. There was a loud, liquid "pop," and a dripping head emerged from the mud almost at her feet. Before she had time to take in this phenomenon, another head, and another, popped up, until the entire lake bed was dotted with them.

"Frogs!" exclaimed Tom, who had just come up with his father.

"Frogs, nothing!" June objected. "Look!"

AS the three watched, the strange creatures pulled themselves from the sticky mud, chattering delightedly. The astonished Tarrants noted that, covered with mud though they were, they were distinctly human. The Japetans, of whom there were two or three hundred, gazed in wonder at the dusty, cloudless sky. Then they caught sight of the sprays of water shooting upward from the

*Like our own moon, Japetus always presents the same face to its mother planet.

rows of pipes. Expertly paddling through the mud on huge flat, webbed feet, they examined the sprinklers in astonishment.

Then, evidently recalled to themselves by a sharp order from the leader, they all wheeled toward the striped yellow bulk of Saturn, stared steadfastly a moment, and abruptly turned their backs to it. Next, in perfect unison, they raised their left arms and, ducking their heads sidewise, solemnly peered from under their lifted arms at the great planet. There was something so inexpressibly droll in the solemnity with which these strange little folk performed their ridiculous rite, that the three watchers burst into shouts of laughter.

Abruptly the Japetans whirled in their direction, stared in stupefaction, and fell prostrate in the mud. Jim Tarrant, long used to dealing with natives of many worlds, stepped to the edge of the lake bed and began speaking in quiet, reassuring tones. Fearfully the little people (the largest were hardly five feet tall) rose and stood still, knee-deep in the ooze. Then, reassured by the friendly smiles of the visitors, and overcome with curiosity, they climbed from the lake bed and surrounded them, chattering and jabbering in excitement. They pointed to the water and then to the Tarrants, who nodded vigorously.

The natives immediately broke into ludicrous, flat-footed capers, dancing round and round the Earth-people, who were gasping with laughter. They peered with awe at the synthesizer, but refused to enter the shed. When Tom turned off the water, they broke into loud wails, instantly silenced when he turned it on again for a moment. Jim finally broke up the rejoicings by pointing to the silent village on the other side of the lake. Instantly they halted their wild gyrations

and, beckoning eagerly to their visitors, plunged into the mud and began paddling across to the far shore. The Tarrants met them on the other side of the lake, a few yards away from the edge of the village.

"So these are the natives we've been worrying about," June observed as they trotted after the capering, shouting Japetans. "Hibernating like frogs! That's the strangest thing I've ever heard of!"

Tarrant, who had visited too many strange places to be surprised at any bizarre form of life, grunted absently. He had been listening to the chattering of the cheery, green-skinned little people.

"Friendly creatures," he mused. "We shouldn't have any trouble with them. And I believe we can soon get the hang of their language. It sounds simple enough."

Their hosts led them into the big central clearing and darted off to their houses.

"Shall we follow them?" June said hesitantly.

"No—let's see what they're going to do," Jim counselled. Back came the natives, laden with foodstuffs, and the Tarrants, squatting cross-legged on the ground in imitation of the Japetans, were treated to such a feast as they had never known before.

"Say these fruits and tubers ought to be popular on Titan," Tom remarked between bites. They were surprised and delighted by the delicious flavor of the dozen varieties of dried fruits, plump potato-like tubers, and crisp nuts. There were great gourd-jars full of a mildly fermented fruit-juice, and heaps of rockhard but delicious little cakes. The Japetans kept up a ceaseless flow of speech, to which the Earth-people replied by nodding and smiling, in complete incomprehension.

THE next few days were pleasant, marred by only one puzzling incident. On one of her walks along the lake bed shore, June had found a tiny black cylinder, charred at one end. Curious, she carried it back to Jim, who examined it thoughtfully.

"Now how did a Martian *Takusmoke* get here?" he muttered. "These things come high — imported direct from Mars. None of us uses the stuff — and certainly the Japetans don't. Someone must have been prowling around on our claim here when we went back for supplies and machinery."

"Say, Dad!" Tom exclaimed, "I wonder if this has anything to do with those shallow holes we found dug in the side of the hill and along the lake shore? You thought they might be metaloscope* craters."

"That's right; I'd forgotten for a minute." He rolled the little cigarette stub reflectively in his palm. "Evidently someone thinks we've discovered a valuable deposit. I guess we shouldn't have kept your synthesizer and your plans secret. That crack-brained reporter—"

"But didn't you report to the government that your tests showed no traces of precious metals?"

"Yes, of course, except for a little copper and traces of some sort of radio-active substance — nothing in workable quantities. Well," he shook his head impatiently, "let's not worry about it any more. The chief has invited us to dinner, remember."

Jim soon picked up enough of the language to begin communication, and was pleased to find that the Japetans were delighted at the prospect of visitors to their country, although they could never quite understand that people actually lived on the moons which

hurtled ghost-like across their never-dark skies. Tarrant, observing the strict Earth law that natives of planets should never be dispossessed, obtained permission from the Japetans to open for colonization the lands that the tribe did not use. One thing the newcomers must promise, however; no one was to enter any ancient city.

"They are sacred," the chief assured Jim solemnly. "Once our ancestors lived in them. Then they went away, but we never profane their ancient abodes."

He rose, and ceremoniously turned his back to the ancient city, the ruins of which crowned a low hill a few miles away. Then he bent over, legs straddled wide apart, and peered between them, much as a football center does when he snaps the ball at the beginning of a play. He performed this ceremony twice, with the utmost solemnity, and then resumed his seat.

Jim, who had witnessed many such strange antics since his arrival on Japetus, managed to preserve his gravity, merely saying politely, "May I ask the meaning of that interesting ceremony?"

"Of course!" The chief was delighted. "Whenever we mention the abodes of our ancestors—" he jumped up and repeated the rite—"we do this to avert any evil which might come to us from talking about them. Perhaps you had better do it, too," he added doubtfully.

"I hardly think that is necessary," Tarrant assured him gravely. "They are not our ancestors, you know; and so long as we do not actually enter the cities, no harm should come to us."

The chief pondered this statement a moment. Then, apparently satisfied, he went back to the water question.

"And you will furnish water for our fields?" he inquired eagerly.

"Yes, of course," Tarrant assured

*A device which detects the presence of metal ore, within a range of 150 feet.

him. "And later on, we can help all the tribes on Japetus."

"May we have big spurt-pipes like yours?" the chief asked, his big eyes glistening.

"As soon as we can obtain more, yes," Jim replied, smiling. "In the meantime, we can do a fair job of flooding your fields so your crops can go in."

"We will also help you with yours," the chief offered magnanimously.

AN ANXIOUS SETTLER

BEFORE the planting was over, the Tarrants were completely won by the absurd lovable little frog-people. The antics and ridiculous superstitions of the natives kept them in spasms of mirth, for even when the Japetans were most solemn, as when they insisted on peering at Saturn from under their left armpits every time they planted a seed or a tuber, the "rain-men" found them irresistible.

One good-humored fellow, who called himself Tra-Da-Lai, insisted on attaching himself to their household, cheerfully helping June with the housework or padding along on his tremendous webbed feet behind Jim and Tom as they inspected the fields.

One day June said to him in his native tongue, "Your name is too hard for me to pronounce in your language, so I am going to call you by an English name—Traddles."

"Trad-dles?" he repeated in delight. "Trad-dles! Now I have a name in your tongue!" And he leaped high into the air, shouting and clapping his hands with joy. Then he bounded out the door and headed straight for his friends.

"I have a name in the rain-men's tongue!" he shouted gleefully. "I am

Traddles!" The others regarded him with envy, until a few of the more enterprising ones decided to interview the Tarrants.

"A name in our language?" Tom said, his mouth twitching. "Well," turning to the spokesman, "I think Bug-Eyes is suitable for you."

"Bug-Eyes?" the native repeated in delight. "That is a splendid name—even better than Traddles!" And the pleased little frog-man pronounced the name until he had mastered it, then strutted joyously away.

"And you," Tom continued, pointing to another, "I hereby name you Slew-Foot; and you," addressing a corpulent little individual, "you are Blubber-Belly."

"Blubber - Belly! Blubber - Belly! That is the finest of all!" the proud recipient beamed. And so it went on, until before long nearly everyone in the village had an English name which he cherished as a mark of distinction.

Jim protested. "It is a shame to make fun of them, son. Some day they may find out the meaning of these names, and then—"

But Tom, the irrepressible, could not resist the opportunity for a chuckle. And Jim, who scrupulously continued to call the natives by their real names, was one day petitioned to use their English cognomens. "Don't you like us, Jim Tarrant?" Blubber-Belly inquired in a hurt tone. "Aren't we worthy of having rain-men names?" So Tarrant, with a helpless shrug, capitulated.

ONE day, just as the first green sprouts were thrusting up through the wet ground, Jim heard the drone of space-ship motors.

"Tom! June!" he shouted. "There's a ship coming over! Must be a messenger from Titan."

The three stood at the edge of the

yard, peering into the dusty sky. They saw first a red streak, then a little blue ship, which swooped directly over them and circled several times before slackening speed and heading for the landing field where the big freighter lay.

The natives, who had become somewhat accustomed to the idea of men flying through the sky, gathered to greet the newcomers. The little blue ship landed in a spurt of dust, and a tall, broad-shouldered man, closely followed by two surly companions, stepped out.

He hesitated a moment, staring in surprise at the crowd of natives. His narrow eyes flicked over the synthesizing-plant and the irrigated fields, as if looking for something. Then, smiling politely, he came forward to greet the three Tarrants.

"I hope you will pardon this intrusion," he began pleasantly, "but word has gotten about on Titan of your sojourn here, and I thought I would pay you a visit. Just roaming around, you know. My name is Spence Burkly, and these are my two friends, Adolf Hilton and Joe Stanley."

"Japetus is not open for colonization yet," Tarrant said quietly, "but there is nothing to prevent your looking around if you wish to."

"My understanding was that there were no inhabitants on Japetus," Burkly continued; "or did you import these creatures for your work?"

"They are natives of Japetus," Jim answered. "Allow me to introduce their chief."

Introductions went around with the proper cordiality. "What enterprise are you carrying on?" the visitor inquired, evidently puzzled.

"We are cultivating native crops," Tarrant replied; "do you care to look around?"

"Crops? I understood that you—or

your son, rather—had invented something to do with mining or—"

"You must have misinterpreted the newspaper accounts," Tom intervened smoothly. "It is a machine for synthesizing water. Perhaps you'd like to look at the apparatus." He led the way over to the shed.

Burkly pulled a gold case from his pocket and extracted a tiny black cylinder. As he lighted it, June started to speak, but a look from Jim stopped her.

"Have things changed much since you were here last?" Tarrant asked casually.

Burkly looked a little startled. "This is my first visit." No one challenged the statement, and he strolled over the place unhampered, trailed by his silent comrades.

"Might as well let him see the whole layout and satisfy his curiosity," Tarrant murmured to his son.

Indeed, Burkly rapidly lost interest when he saw no signs of mining. He courteously refused the chief's offer of a house, and announced that he must be moving along.

"Perhaps when the government opens the country for colonization, I may stake a claim," he suggested as he climbed into his flyer.

The little blue ship took off in a swish of flame.

THE end of harvest time was a signal for the Japetans to elect a new chief. Rosv, the old one, modestly announced his willingness to serve again, but he had a young and vigorous opponent who was making life miserable for him.

"But what's the matter with Rosv?" Jim inquired of one villager, who proudly bore the name of Bugsie. "Hasn't he been a good chief?"

"Oh, yes," the Japetan replied tranquilly, "but we want a change. One

gets so tired of always seeing the same chief. Besides, Wkie has promised that, with him as chief, the crops will be better than ever before."

"How can he make them better?" Tarrant asked skeptically. "They're good enough now."

"I know, but he *says* he can do it." And that, of course, settled the matter, at least as far as Bugsie was concerned.

Before the next sleep-period, Wkie, to prove what a superior chief he would make, announced a feast to be given to all the villagers. The rainmen were also invited. He served lavish refreshments, and entertained his guests with a four-piece band. The Earth-people had never learned to appreciate the pounding, squeaky discords that passed for Japetan music, but the villagers listened, entranced.

The visitors exchanged glances. "Poor Rosv," murmured June; "I'm afraid this is his finish."

But Rosv was not to be discouraged. The next day he announced a feast, with a *six*-piece band to furnish music. Bugsie was there, as prominent as he had been at Wkie's entertainment.

"Why, Bugsie," Tom remonstrated, "I thought you were a supporter of Wkie!"

Bugsie rolled his big eyes in surprise. "Why, that's all right. We may as well have a good time while the candidates are interested in us. After election, they certainly won't be."

Before the momentous issue was decided, however, Jim Tarrant was ready to report back to Titan. Loading the big freighter with samples of the Japetan foodstuffs, and carrying with him his maps and photographs of the country, he took off, leaving Tom and June to run things while he was gone.

His business was soon over. The

Titanian Earth-government agreed to grant claims to colonists, furnishing them with synthesizers on credit. Tarrant, as Governor-General of Japetus, would place the colonists when they came in, to make sure that no injustice was done the mud-folk. A detail of surveyors would return with him to map the claims. In addition, he was allowed a fleet of small, fast exploration ships, to facilitate opening the country.

THE ANCIENT CITY

BY the time Japetus had made five revolutions around its parent planet star, it was a transformed world.* Little settlements had sprung up even on the Central Desert, where no natives had ever before attempted to live. Everywhere the Japetans, delighted by the prospect of an unending supply of water, were friendly and cooperative.

The government sent out a detail of metallurgists to confirm Tarrant's report that there were no metals, at least near the surface, in workable quantities. A fair-sized deposit of radio-active ore, however, was discovered along the edge of the Darkside, and miners, clad in the usual ray-proof suits and helmets, toiled for weeks to extract a sufficient amount of the metal to enable the government technicians to determine its nature.

Jim was frankly relieved when he received the report that Japetus would be valuable only as a farming country.

"That's fine," he remarked to Tom. "Now there's no danger of the disorder and trouble that might be caused by swarms of get-rich-quick people. This new metal's interesting, all right, but it doesn't appear to have any possibilities. Good thing there isn't much

*Japetus revolves around Saturn in 79 days, 8 hours.

of it, or we wouldn't be able to live here."

"Why not, Dad?" Tom inquired in surprise.

"Well, see what the report says: 'This new metal, which has been named japetium, is like other radioactive metals in their various stages, in that it emits alpha, beta, and gamma rays. But in addition, it throws off another one, hitherto unknown, now called the J-ray, which causes an almost immediate disintegration of tissue placed within the range of its emanation. This drastic effect renders it unfit for any practical use. Another interesting feature of japetium is its apparently almost indefinite period of transformation.'

"And that's that. Now we can develop our irrigation projects in peace."

"Fine—if everything is going along so well, how about you asking for a substitute for us so we can all three go off on a space-jaunt, like old times?"

His father smiled wryly. "Afraid not, son. The country's still too new; things might go wrong. Trouble can develop in a hurry, you know—" He glanced out the window as an incoming space-vessel roared down toward the nearby field. His face went grim. "For instance." He jerked his head in the direction of a familiar blue flyer just settling to the ground.

A few minutes later Spence Burkly stood in the doorway. "Good morning, gentlemen. At least," pointing with a smile to the Saturn-chronometer on the wall, "I suppose you'd call it morning. Well, I've decided to join your little group here on Japetus. Here's my claim," placing a document on the desk. "I have asked for a location somewhere near the lower ridges of the Blue Mountains, toward the Twilight Zone."

Jim's bushy black eyebrows rose in

surprise. "Why that particular part of the country? It is rather remote from any government center and generally considered too rocky for advantageous cultivation."

Burkly answered pleasantly enough. "I am willing to chance it, Mr. Tarrant. I happen to like the view. Will you kindly allot me my section? You will find the papers quite in order."

Silently Tarrant unrolled a wall map and examined it a moment. "Here is a vacant claim, comprising the lower end of Blue Valley. There is a native settlement within a few miles, so you should have no trouble obtaining workers—if you win their friendship."

Burkly laughed. "Yes, of course; I shall take the little Froggies to my heart."

"They're a friendly people, if you treat them right. They—"

"Never mind, son," Tarrant intervened hastily. "Here you are, Mr. Burkly. Tom will send out a crew to install your irrigation system. Oh, and another thing—" as Burkly rose to leave; "there happens to be, according to this survey map, one of the larger of the ancient cities quite near your location. You understand, of course, that no one is to enter those ruins."

"Oh, naturally," Burkly nodded courteously. "Good-day, Governor."

THINGS went smoothly for a while. Tom, returning from a tour of inspection, reported that Burkly had secured the willing cooperation of the natives by means of gifts and feasts. His land was planted, his houses built; all seemed serene.

"Nevertheless—" Tarrant's black eyes were worried; "I wonder what his game is, Tom. Burkly is not a farmer—he wants to get his in a hurry. Here are the confidential reports of him and the five men he has imported. Burkly himself has been in several shady

deals, although no one has ever been able to convict him. As for these five men of his—they're a rare lot."

Tom read the reports, dismay growing in his brown eyes. "Adolf Hilton—expelled from Mars for extortion in the famous Red City ruby swindle; claimed right of a new start on Titan—paroled to Spence Burkly . . . Mike Koska, under suspended sentence in connection with the disappearance of Samuel Burnley, diamond king of Dione—paroled to Spence Burkly. Paroled!" He snorted in disgust. "He's certainly gathered a first rate collection of jailbirds! Dad, how does a man like that rate a claim on Japetus?"

Jim shrugged his shoulders helplessly. "Ask the government at Titan City, Tom. Meanwhile, let's keep a close watch on him. He is up to something, though I'm hanged if I can quite figure what."

It was not long before he found out—when the radio operator called Jim to the two-way inter-city transmission set. "It's Carnes of Blue-Mountain City," he reported.

Tarrant was busy. "Yes?" he called impatiently.

"A native from Spence Burkly's plantation came in an hour ago, wounded and scared. He told us that Burkly tried to get his people to enter the ruins on Mount Dukai and—"

"Enter an ancient city?" Jim interrupted. "But he knows that is strictly forbidden!"

"I know, and the natives protested—said it was desecration and all that."

"But did he have any idea why Burkly wanted to go there?"

"Yes, sir; it seems there is a very old legend of a hidden treasure hoard in the city."

"Treasure?" Tarrant was incredulous. "Why, there aren't any jewels or precious metals on Japetus."

"The native either couldn't or wouldn't say—just knew that the legend had been handed down from remotest times."

"Well," impatiently, "go on; is Burkly on his way?"

"I suppose so. The messenger was in pretty bad condition—one hand burned off at the wrist. When the Japetans refused to go, Burkly threatened to kill them. Some of them tried to escape, and he and his men shot them down in cold blood. This poor devil was hurt, but managed to get away."

"Select five good patrolmen!" Jim snapped. "I'll pick them up on the way."

The little patrol-ship roared toward Blue-Mountain City.

"Damn Spence Burkly!" Jim muttered. "I knew it—"

"Killing the mud-folk!" June was indignant. "They are such friendly little people!"

Jim and Tom had tried in vain to make her stay home; but, "I've been in this with you from the first," she had declared stubbornly, "and I'm not going to quit now." And that settled it. Traddles, scared but loyal, was along too.

At Blue-Mountain City, Jim picked up the native as a guide, and on the trip to the mountain, he listened to the pitiful story. The Japetan's soft brown eyes were wide with pain and terror as he talked.

"Spence Burkly is perhaps even now desecrating the city," he half sobbed. This time Jim did not smile at the absurd kowtows of the two natives which, as always, accompanied mention of the sacred place. "We always thought he was a fine man, although we never liked his men—they were often arrogant and cruel; but he was kind to us, and talked to us a great deal. That is how he found out—" He

shuddered. "One work period he gathered us together and said he wanted about twenty of us to go with him on a journey into the hills. That was all right with us, and we set about preparing. We did not suspect his purpose, until my brother overheard one of the men say something about Mount Dukai and the treasure. Then we all went to Spence Burkly and told him we could not do this evil thing."

HIS eyes were haunted. "Jim Tarrant, I never saw such a change in any one. His face, always before so pleasant, grew hard and cruel; he told us we *must* go. We were frightened then, and some tried to run away." His breath caught. "He and his men shot at them! I saw my brother fall, burned in two, and I ran. They—they—" He mutely held up the banded stump of his wrist.

Jim's eyes were black pools of anger. "The dirty— But some of you escaped, Kai. Where did you go—those of you who were not killed or captured?"

A smile of triumph briefly touched the green face. "We buried ourselves in the mud flats. Stupid fools! They never thought of that. And after a while, when they had gone away, I crept out of the mud and went to the city to get word to you. You are our friend," he ended simply.

Jim patted his shoulder. "Of course, Kai. But tell me, what is this great treasure that Spence Burkly has heard about?"

"I don't know, Jim Tarrant; truly I do not know. We have always known that our ancestors hid it there, and that it is forbidden to disturb their ancient living-places."

"Has anyone ever gone into the city?" Tarrant persisted. "You know that we can do more to avenge this sacrilege if we understand something

about the nature of the place."

The Japetan hesitated, bobbed vigorously before replying. "Jim Tarrant, you have always befriended my people, and I will tell you. Once, when I was a child, a neighbor of mine, being overbold and curious, entered the city, unknown to the elders. He returned much frightened, and declared that while he was wandering among the buildings, his whole body began to tingle and itch. After a few sleep-periods, great sores broke out all over him, and before much longer, he died in agony. So we knew that the spirits of our ancestors had punished him."

Tom and June exchanged glances. Traddles, wide-eyed, was drinking in the ghastly tale. "These Japetans certainly put their whole hearts—and imaginations—into their superstitions," Tom whispered to his wife. Jim, however, said nothing, but stared thoughtfully at the great blue mass of Mount Dukai emerging from the distance, half enveloped in the clouds that heralded the approach of the rainy season.

"The clouds will help us get close before anyone sees us," Jim grunted. "Burkly will probably post a sentry, so we'll have to be careful. You say there's no place to land the ship near the city, Kai?"

"No." Kai and Traddles were having a hard time, in the cramped quarters of the ship, bobbing their heads between their legs in the correct evil-dispelling gesture, but they did their vigorous best, to the secret mirth of the others.

"At least," Kai went on as soon as he had caught his breath, "that is what I heard Spence Burkly say. But there is a plateau halfway up the mountain and a trail from there on."

"Say," Jim grinned, "for a person who has never been there, you know a good deal, Kai."

SF

The native fairly dizzied himself and his watchers, bobbing his head between his straddled legs. When he righted himself again, his face greener than ever, he confessed: "Jim Tarrant, as a child I sometimes crept quite close to the city—all of us did, in a spirit of daring. But we never entered—except that one I told you of. And after his punishment, we did not even venture up the trail."

Jim dropped the little ship as close to the foothills as he dared, barely drifting now in his effort to keep the motors muffled. "They're probably expecting us," he explained; "but if we can surprise them, maybe we can avoid unnecessary trouble."

Kai looked disappointed. "No trouble, Jim Tarrant? I thought you were going to destroy them all for their wickedness!"

"No, Kai. We simply want to prevent their desecrating your ancestors by removing the treasure—if there is any. If we can capture them alive, we'll take them back to Titan for trial."

Kai shook his head in bewilderment and looked at Traddles, who spread his great hands in resignation. At times even his beloved Tarrants were quite beyond his comprehension.

Mount Dukai heaved its blue bulk into the sky. Halfway up its rocky sides, a smooth green plateau offered them a haven. They rose slowly from the valley they had been following, and hovered a moment above the table-land. Jim was not surprised to see a small blue ship half hidden in the undergrowth, and let his vessel drop silently to the ground.

"Let's hope they didn't notice us from above," he grunted. "They may have left a guard, so be careful. Each of you take a space-suit."

"Space-suit?" one of the patrolmen asked in surprise. "Why?"

"Hunch," he replied laconically. "Cover the other ship when you get out; and you, Conners," turning to a grim-looking officer, "you stay here as guard. Traddles, you and Kai had better stay and help him. The trail is clear, so there's no need for Kai to guide us."

The two natives had been casting fearful glances at the sacred mountain, and grateful relief lighted up their ingenuous faces. Not for worlds would they have entered the forbidden city, but Jim had forestalled the necessity of their refusing.

"We will stay here and try to ward off the evil spell," Traddles offered eagerly; "since you are going to avenge the desecration of the city," bobbing desperately, "perhaps our ancestors will not be angry. And your magic—" he nodded respectfully toward the awkward suits hung over their arms—"may be strong enough to keep you from harm. And besides," he swept his arm across the span of the sky, "the Contrary One* is not in the heavens."

"What's that got to do with it?" Tom could not forbear asking.

"Why," Traddles explained solemnly, "when the Contrary One is visible, no enterprise begun during that time will be successful."

"Well, that's a new one," Tom grinned. "Seems to me I've heard before about the dark of the moon, somewhere."

"Come on," Jim urged a trifle sharply; "we've a climb before us."

VENGEANCE FROM THE PAST!

THE little group skirted the clearing and were soon at the foot of the rocky slope. They began the long climb; and once June,

*Phoebe, ninth moon of Saturn, has a retrograde motion.

looking back at the plateau, could not restrain a giggle as she caught a glimpse of two solemn green figures, backs to the sacred summit, staring steadfastly upward from between widespread legs. Far above, occasional rifts in the clouds revealed crumbling stone buildings clinging to the sides of the azure cliffs, tragic in their lonely grandeur and mystery. The narrow, partly obliterated trail had been rendered easier to follow by the recent passage of Burkly and his men, and the pursuers made fairly good time. They had released their gravity adjustors as much as they dared, desiring to keep full control of their muscles in case of ambush.

At that, the trip was hazardous and tiring. At times they had to inch their way along a narrow ledge leading along the edge of a sheer drop into the blue depths of the valleys below. True, if they had fallen, a quick twist of their gravity-adjustor controls would have sent them floating safely down, but no one had a desire at the moment to go wafting off into space. There was work ahead—work and grim danger.

The rugged cliffs jutting over their heads made them feel reasonably safe from discovery from above, but as they approached the summit, their caution increased. Jim, coma-gun* in hand, scouted a few feet ahead, and they were not surprised when, peering around a huge weathered blue rock, he flung his hand back in warning and aimed the revolver. There was a hollow "pop" as the wicked little weapon released its deadening charge, and Tarrant exclaimed in satisfaction.

*A revolver which catapults numerous minute needles, filled with an insulin-derivative, into the skin of its victim, causing unconsciousness by lowering the sugar-content of the blood. It is, of course, used only at short range and when the death of the victim is not desired.

He motioned to his group and they followed eagerly around the abutment. Crumpled unconscious across the trail, lay Burkly's sentry, heat-gun lying useless beside him.

Jim grinned. "There's one of them." He was beginning to enjoy this diversion from office work. "Here, son, give a hand with this rope." When the outlaw was securely bound, Jim administered a hypodermic of glucose. "Not that I care whether he lives or dies, but—" He rolled the unconscious prisoner into a cleft in the rocks bordering the trail. "Get your suits on boys—you, too, June. And as soon as we set foot in the city, use your air tanks."

"But whatever for?" June asked, startled. "The air's all right up here, isn't it?"

"I don't know," he admitted, his fingers busy with the fastenings of the suit. They walked on. "I have a feeling that there's a basis for this superstition about the cities. There's something dangerous about them, probably some sort of protection the ancients set up. These suits will turn any ray or emanation. No use taking—"

June barely repressed a scream. Sprawled across the trail, where it opened onto the first terrace of buildings, were three Japetans, mangled and charred.

"Poor devils!" Tarrant's jaw set grimly. "Burkly must have captured them and brought them along; but you see how powerful their belief was in the curse of the sacred cities—they chose death rather than enter."

June shuddered. "This dreadful place! It's getting on my nerves."

"Well—" Tom began smugly.

"I know, I know!" she retorted. "But you couldn't have kept me from coming."

"All right, you two!" Jim inter-

rupted. "Too late for recriminations. Everybody remember—these suits aren't wired for radio, but have vibration amplifiers, so be sure to touch the person you are talking to. They'll bring in outside sounds all right. Close faceplates!"

The suited figures shuffled along the narrow, broken terraces. Weathered blue and white blocks of stone and shattered columns lay everywhere, mute evidence of buildings that had at last succumbed to the slow attack of time. Tracks in the dust told the searchers of the recent passage of their prey, while shallow depressions scooped out of exposed ground showed where the metaloscope had been set up.

A few buildings still stood defiant, their empty windows staring out over the folds of hills and valleys below. Tarrant's party picked their way upward toward a huge, low-spread building that crowned the summit. As they approached, they saw that it was in remarkably good condition, although here and there a wall had crumbled or a stretch of roof caved in. Jim made for a low archway that had evidently been recently cleared of rubble.

"Here's where they went in! Careful, now!"

"Those old fellows certainly knew their architecture," murmured Tom, his hand on June's arm. "No telling how old this place is, and look at it!"

They entered a passage cluttered here and there with fallen stones, some of which had recently been pushed aside. "One thing we can say for Burkly and his boys," a patrolman observed to Jim, "they left a clear trail. Probably figured they'd get away before we'd come, or that the sentry'd spot us."

"How light it is!" June exclaimed to Tom. "But where are the windows?"

TOM peered narrowly at the masonry. Then he pointed to the angle of wall and ceiling, from which a soft pinkish glow emanated. "Lights! After all these centuries! Some form of atomic radiation, probably. It—Hey! Look at these carvings!"

For a moment their grim mission was forgotten as they stared at the long-hidden carved, painted pictures of a vanished race, arranged in panels as though to suggest a connected story. The wall had crumbled in places, but the faded pictures still showed a happy, beautiful race, strikingly like the ancient Egyptians of far-off Earth, living and playing in massive blue and white stone buildings—"These buildings!" June whispered. Greenish, frog-like people were everywhere, serving the others. Then came scenes showing drouth, hunger, oppressive heat. Next, as they threaded their way down the glowing corridor, they saw scientists and engineers toiling over intricate machinery, streams of workers carrying huge parts down a narrow, winding trail to a familiar plateau . . . then, flocks of strange, disc-shaped objects, rising in the air above a tiny, deserted blue and white city perched on a mountain top.

At last, the passage made an abrupt left-hand turn to reveal, spread over walls and ceiling, the majestic sweep of the solar system. Their eyes followed a thin red line beginning at an infinitesimal speck near mighty, ringed Saturn, and leading unerringly across the depths of space to a tiny green planet, third from the great flaming sun. Even the taciturn patrolmen exchanged glances of incredulous surmise.

"Tom!" June whispered through dry lips; "do you suppose—"

"I don't know . . ."

They were jerked out of their amazement by a distant ring of metal on stone. "Come on!" Jim motioned abruptly. "Quiet!"

They crept along the narrowing corridor to a flight of steps which plunged into the semi-darkness of an underground level. A few feet ahead they saw a faint glow and heard the clink of implements and the murmur of voices. Like grey shadows, the suited group slid along the blue stone wall, until they approached a heavy, elaborately wrought door, which had been hauled open a few feet.

Then they surrounded Tarrant, laying their gloved hands on his suit, to receive his orders. "Be ready to shoot when I give the signal to charge," Jim told them. "If they got first shot—"

He motioned them to silence, and inched his way to the doorway. Suddenly a triumphant shout rang out. They recognized Burkly's voice: "This must be it, boys, in this box over here."

Tarrant, peering warily around the door jamb, saw the men gathered about a large semi-transparent chest, one corner of which had been smashed, evidently by a stone that had long ago been dislodged from the ceiling. The metaloscope lay forgotten. Eagerly the thieves hauled back the remains of the massive cover and thrust their arms deep into the box, dragging forth great bars of metal that glowed with a sinister blue-white emanation. Tarrant's signal to charge was never given. Even as he lifted his hand, a horrid, blood-chilling scream shuddered through the time-worn walls.

The incredulous watchers, who had involuntarily crowded to the door, saw the plunderers glowing with a phosphorescent blue light. The doomed men, as if unable to comprehend what was happening, stood still a moment,

their clothes dropping off in rotten rags. Then they threw themselves to the stone floor, screaming, oblivious of the treasure scattered all about them. Their skins became white and blistered, then rawly red, as if under a giant blowtorch. One ghastly figure, a tiny black cylinder still clinging to his disintegrating lips, tried to crawl toward the doorway, but lurched forward lifelessly. In fascinated horror, the group at the entrance saw the flesh shrivel and drop away, the bones themselves begin to crumble.

Tarrant broke the nightmare spell. He darted into the death-chamber and, securing a minute fragment of the glowing metal, carefully stowed it in his special belt pouch. Then, joining the others and motioning them to help him, he began to push frenziedly at the massive door. Under their combined efforts, it slowly dragged shut, closing on the fatal treasure hoard, on little heaps of whitish, smoldering powder . . .

The survivors scarcely needed Jim's signal; of one accord they turned and raced along the dim corridor, up the cracked stairs, through the softly-lighted passage depicting a long-vanished race, out onto the cracked terraces. Nor did they open their faceplates until they were well out of the city.

Then, at the head of the trail, they stopped and removed the cumbersome, ray-proof suits which, they realized, had saved them from the fate of Spence Burkly and his gang.

"What was it?" June asked fearfully, collapsing on a convenient rock. Her eyes were still shadowed with the horror she had witnessed.

"I won't know positively until I have this sample analyzed," Tarrant replied, patting the pouch at his belt. "But I feel reasonably sure it was a hoard of *jaquetium*. When Kai told us

about the man who came back badly burned, I felt that he must have exposed himself to a relatively mild bombardment of J-rays. Remember the broken cover of the box? Then when Burkly and his men actually handled the stuff—"

THEY began scrambling back down the trail, rapidly this time, for their need of caution was gone. When they came to the half-conscious sentry, the patrolmen freed him.

"If Burkly had his metaloscope along," Tom pondered, "why didn't the fool see what he was running into?"

"He probably didn't realize what it was," Tarrant answered. "He just noted the presence of a large amount of metal, and barged right in on it."

"What puzzles me," June broke in,

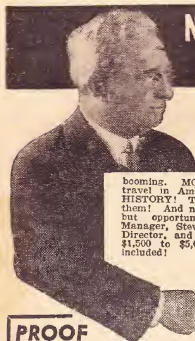
"is how those ancients collected such a lot of it, without danger to themselves. And whatever did they use the stuff for?"

"Perhaps as a source of power," Jim hazarded. "My guess is that Japetus was just one of their colonies—that they came from some other planet originally, or even from another solar system. They probably used this city as a storage place and thought they would return for their cache."

"But they never did," June murmured thoughtfully.

"Well," one of the patrolmen interrupted, "we won't have so many prisoners to take back, except this fellow here."

"No," Jim turned to look back at the lonely city; "we won't need to punish Burkly's gang for breaking the Japetan treaty."



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Star of Blue

By MILTON KALETSKY

"**A**ND so, my dear marshal, you have no choice but to surrender unconditionally."

Generalissimo Ankeen, commander-in-chief of the battle forces of Mars, paused to note the effect of this declaration on his prisoner of war, Marshal Hughes, leader of Earth's fighting men.

The Earthman's look of cold contempt did not change. Over his pale, lined features, his bushy gray eyebrows rose a little as he returned the Martian's stare. But he said nothing.

Ankeen scowled. "I repeat, Hughes, in the eight days since we captured you, your battle fleets have been largely ruined. Oh, your men fought bravely and did us a lot of damage, I admit, but without you to lead them—" the Martian bowed derisively—"my forces smashed your chief fleets, and now Earth lies helpless before me!"

A triumphant leer passed across the Martian's green face. Marshal Hughes' impassive features showed no change, and still he said nothing.

Ankeen looked annoyed.

"This bravado of yours will do you no good," he told Hughes in his thin, piping voice, "just as the courage of Earth's defenders will do them no good either. If you do not order them to surrender, they will go on fighting and I'll be compelled to destroy them utterly. It means the death of millions and the responsibility for this bloodshed will lie directly on you."

Marshal Hughes smiled thinly.

"Typical Martian logic," he remarked quietly. "*You'll murder millions of Earthmen who want only peace and then you'll blame me for it.*"

Generalissimo Ankeen glared at Hughes. "This is war! Nothing can stop Mars from conquering the entire solar system, and I'm going to do it!"

His voice rose fanatically, then it dropped suddenly and took on an almost pleading note.

"Hughes, you're absolute dictator of Earth during this war and your people will obey you. Save them from destruction! Order them to surrender!"

The Earthman answered with quiet pride. "Yes, they will obey me. And I have given them only one order: 'Fight on!'"

Ankeen sneered a sarcastic reply. "Very, very dramatic, my dear marshal, but very very foolish. The day of such heroism on the part of generals is long over. No longer do leaders of armies and fleets fight with their men as you do. That's why you were captured, Hughes, while I sat safely on Mars.

"In fact," Ankeen continued, "I have never been off this planet, yet every move my men make, every action they carry out, is planned and directed solely by me. Alone, I am the guiding mind of Mars!"

He paused, enjoying the sound of his own voice boasting of his power.

"Right from this room here on Mars I directed the conquest of Venus and

Marshall Hughes, leader of Earth's fighting men, finds himself faced with surrender to the heartless ruler of Mars—until he looks into the heavens where the fate of his world rests upon the identification of a color—

of Jupiter's moons. Earth is next!"

Hughes answered noncommittally, "Perhaps."

The Martian's face grew dark with anger. He leaned forward across the table between them to shake his three-fingered fist at Marshal Hughes.

"You doubt me? Then listen to this: At this very moment, my bombing space-ships are over the largest cities of Earth, blasting them into nothingness, smashing them to powder, wiping out their inhabitants. I've called on them to surrender and save their lives and property, but until they hear from you, they intend to fight on, at any cost.

"Do you hear, Hughes? I'm destroying New York, London, Paris, Buenos Aires, Tokio, Berlin and Rio de Janeiro right now!"

THE Martian sank back in his seat, panting with excitement.

Marshal Hughes stared into his enemy's eyes and spoke calmly. "You lie interestingly but unconvincingly, Ankeen."

Ankeen stood up, his eight feet of height curved over the Earthman. With a wide mocking grin, he hissed, "Then watch this, my dear marshal."

He turned to the curtain-draped wall behind him. Tugging at a cord, he drew the curtain aside, revealing a great television screen covering the entire wall. He snapped a switch to darken the room and turned on the television receiver.

"By my order," he said, "some of the ships attacking Earth are televising the battle and are transmitting by beam to Mars. You will now see for yourself how helpless Earth is."

On the huge screen, blurred patches of light were resolving themselves into a clear picture. There on the screen, in full natural color, appeared a night view of London from the air.

High over the sprawling, blacked-out metropolis, lighted only by the moon, the spherical Martian war vessels whirled and zoomed, dropping showers of small but deadly atomite bombs that blasted great craters out of the close-packed buildings.

From the ground below, beams of explosive light flashed upwards, seeking the attackers. Once, twice, and again the beams found their marks and Martian ships blasted apart in vast blinding flashes of light. But there were hundreds of Martian ships, and the defense batteries on the ground were rapidly going out of action as bombs fell on or near them.

Ankeen twisted a dial and abruptly the scene shifted to New York. Hughes felt a spasm of homesickness as he recognized the familiar towers of Manhattan, reaching skywards a mile and more over the slender island.

Here, too, clouds of Martian ships floated over the city, scattering destruction. A few squadrons of Earth's battle fleet tore wildly back and forth in a futile counter-attack. Greatly outnumbered, they would all soon be ripped to fragments.

THOUGH the marshal sat rigidly still, within him his heart was pounding fiercely as he watched the uneven battle, his men, his brave men, fighting with such courage, when courage alone was not enough. They needed ships, and had so few. Ankeen was right; he had to order them to surrender. This slaughter was unnecessary and futile.

The scene shifted from place to place as the Martian operating the televisior changed the direction of the scanner. Hughes groaned in despair as he caught an upward glimpse of the rows and rows of gleaming Martian ships against the night sky. How many times he had stood on a high

Manhattan roof to study the stars in the quiet night. And now the scintillating pin-points were almost blotted out by the ranks of fighting ships.

A brilliant flash momentarily hid the sky. A lucky hit by a Martian cruiser had wiped out an entire squadron of Earth's valiant defenders.

But Hughes ignored the disaster, his mind whirling with bewilderment over something he'd glimpsed just before that brilliant flash. He waited anxiously for another upwards view.

The television scanner dropped for a close view of the wreckage on Manhattan. From end to end, the buildings lay in tumbled heaps of brick and steel, and still the remaining defense batteries spit forth their reply to the Martians.

Then the scene turned upwards again, to the swarms of vessels passing and repassing overhead. Hughes strained his eyes desperately. He had to be sure before he made his decision. His eyes flashed over the screen. Yes . . . there it was again. . . .

"Ankeen!" Hughes' voice was hoarse with despair. "Turn it off. You were right. There's no use fighting against such odds."

As the room was lighted again, the Martian leaped eagerly to his desk, trembling with exultation at his victory. Quickly he scrawled a few words on a sheet of paper and thrust it at the Earthman.

Hughes read it, nodded slowly, and said, "If I sign this, you must send me back to Earth at once to organize reconstruction."

Ankeen hastily nodded agreement and Hughes signed the paper. It was a declaration of complete and unconditional surrender.

Shoulders drooping, Hughes rose and strode to a window to stare out at the night sky over Mars, while An-

keen, chortling gleefully, called his underlings and issued orders to inform the fighting ships of the surrender.

From the window, Hughes asked irrelevantly, "Ankeen, did you ever study astronomy?"

"Astronomy!" snorted the Martian, looking up from a mass of papers, "Why should a practical man like me read about stars? I don't need to know space navigation. I never leave Mars. Why'd you ask?" he demanded, eyeing Hughes with keen suspicion.

"Oh, no special reason. Just that the stars are so clear here on Mars because of the thin atmosphere. Saturn and Jupiter are visible now. And that beautiful blue planet there! That's Earth, my home!"

Ankeen stared at him in surprise, then shouted disgustedly. "Bah! What silly sentiment! Come along, my dear poet, I'll arrange to send you back to your beautiful blue planet, so you can spend all your time star-gazing. Astronomy! Hah!"

TWO days later, Ankeen sat in his headquarters, impatiently waiting for a communication from his fleet commander. At Ankeen's order, the Martian fleet had withdrawn from Earth and had returned to its bases on Earth's moon for repairs and refueling. On Luna also was the remainder of Earth's fleet, surrendered under the terms of the armistice. Meanwhile his spies on Earth reported that the Earthmen were abandoning their defenses, as promised by Marshal Hughes.

All this news made Ankeen swell with satisfaction. So far his plans were working out perfectly. One more step remained, one small step.

As soon as preparations were completed, Ankeen gloated, his fleet would attack Earth again—and undefended Earth now—and without warning

would completely destroy all factories, industries and cities, just as he had smashed the nations on Venus and Jupiter's moons after they had surrendered.

That would remove forever the last obstacle to Mars' domination of the solar system. Then indeed would Ankeen be supreme in the universe and never would another planet grow strong enough to challenge Mars!

His happy musings were interrupted by the buzz of the televisior. That would be his fleet commander reporting that all was ready for the attack on Earth.

It *was* his fleet commander, but one look at the man's panic-stricken face sent a pulse of terror through Ankeen.

"General!" the fleet commander gasped. "We have been tricked! The Earthmen are attacking us!"

"What!" screamed Ankeen shrilly. "With what ships? Why are you not fighting back?"

"We did not expect attack and our ships were all in the repair sheds. The crews were outside the ships, resting. We are being destroyed on the ground before we can man the guns. Oh, now they are blasting the buildings here and—"

The screen lighted with a blinding glare, then faded into darkness. On the moon, the televisior had just been blown to bits, together with an entire Martian space-ship base.

Before Ankeen could choke down his fury, the screen lighted under a new signal. Marshal Hughes appeared, seated at the controls of a battle cruiser.

Ankeen's lidless eyes bulged in uncontrollable rage as he shrieked curses at the Earthman.

"You broke your word!" he howled finally. "You tricked me into believing you would surrender! Forever will your deceit be remembered by Mars

and I will destroy Earth utterly for your swindle!"

"Shut up," snapped Hughes coldly. "I keep my word when it is honestly obtained, but you got me to sign that surrender *under false pretenses*, and you know it. The entire world will know it, *and I knew it when I signed it!*"

The Martian stared dumbly, strangled by disappointment and fury.

"That was a good job of acting you did two days ago," said Hughes, smiling. "You had me convinced by telling me part of the truth. It was true that Earth's fleet was mostly destroyed, but you didn't tell me that your fleet was also almost all smashed, too. You didn't tell me you feared another battle might finish what was left of your fleet, and so you decided to try trickery.

"Nor did you tell me you intended to destroy Earth's industries and cities after we surrendered. But I remembered what you did to Venus and Jupiter and I knew you'd do the same to Earth."

HUGHES paused, smiled contemptuously at the speechless Martian, and went on calmly.

"I still had an ace up my sleeve, Ankeen, which I wouldn't have used if you'd been honest. Forty new, modern battle rockets were my ace, built secretly and just finished. We caught your men completely by surprise, and so now, my dear Ankeen, I must ask *you* to surrender!"

The Martian gurgled and gasped, curses and oaths pouring from his rage-distorted mouth.

"Shall I tell you how I knew you were tricking me, my dear Ankeen?" Hughes went on, mimicking the mocking tone Ankeen had once used, "how I knew that the 'television' views of your fleet attacking Earth

were just *motion pictures*?"

Hughes grinned as he continued. "A beautiful work of art, my dear Ankeen. Very accurate models of Earth's cities, those were.

"But you missed one point, Ankeen! When I saw the sky on that screen, I could see the planets. If the scene were really on Earth, at this time of

year, I should have seen a red planet—Mars. Instead I saw a blue planet—Earth! And so I knew without doubt that those scenes had occurred on Mars!

"Why should a practical man like you read about the stars, Ankeen? I guess you can answer that question yourself now!"

Have You Met Mimi?

You should be personally acquainted with Mimi O'Graff, the little miss who turns out many an interesting science-fiction fan magazine. Turn to "The Fantasy Fan" department in this issue of SCIENCE FICTION, and you will find there several items of interest to lovers of fantasy—besides a list of many of the leading fan magazines—little publications designed to bring you information about the people behind the scenes in the science-fiction world.

If You Like Science!

—you will like "The Eternal Conflict," our department of scientific controversy. Here our scientifically inclined readers (and they are legion) argue the various phases of science as pertinent to science-fiction. Perhaps you have a pet scientific peeve, or some new theory to put forth. If so, send your letter to "The Eternal Conflict," care of SCIENCE FICTION, 60 Hudson Street, New York City.

The Eternal Conflict



A reader's department of scientific controversy. You are invited to send in your science arguments to THE ETERNAL CONFLICT, SCIENCE FICTION, 60 Hudson St., New York City.

IN this department, we present the views of our readers about the future—both the scientific and social developments that are likely to come about. How do you think that science will change the world? We want your opinion on this matter, so write us today! If you disagree with any of this month's contributors, let them know about it via THE ETERNAL CONFLICT.

THE NATURE OF THE ATOM

by EDWARD P. SUMERS

NOW for the atomic discussion progressing in "The Eternal Conflict." It won't be eternal, 'cause here's the solution. (No pun intended?) The Atomic Hypothesis states that all material substances are composed of atoms. I think we all know that, but here is something else: the atom is most recently regarded as a complex system composed of electrically dynamic, pulsating particles of infinitesimal matter; but wave mechanics, which is a modern outgrowth of one of the branches of physics devoted to the study of radiations (X-rays, gamma rays, cosmic rays, etc.), has it that the atom is composed of a nucleus and a shell, which may approximately be pictured as a center of positive electricity embedded in and

surrounded by concentric spherical shells of diffuse negative electricity, growing denser toward the nucleus. Mind you, this is but an hypothesis; proof is yet to be found.

If, as stated, this is the case, why shouldn't we all be destroyed when a physicist grounds a charge of electricity? And why shouldn't the world explode because a man starts a fire? You know, a fire does destroy atoms—maybe not all the atoms, as evidenced by charcoal, but most of them. N'est-ce pas? So when U-235 explodes, I'll be wrong, but as far as I can see, it won't, it can't, and it never will.

So much for that. Are you groggy yet, Ed? If not, let's go a bit farther into the why and wherefore of things and discuss Einstein. No? O. K. I resign.

SCIENCE IN THE STORIES

by GENE RISHER

JUST a few words in regard to Mr. F. Dodge's letter in the Department of the January issue.

He berates the scarcity of science in the stories. Well, I have this to say to Mr. Dodge.

First of all, I don't think there is such a great lack of science in our stories, but that it is given in a form which is easily understood, so to the more advanced in that science, it is

overlooked for that reason, while to the majority of the readers, it may require considerable thought to digest it. Example: A truck driver or a pro chauffeur gets no kick out of driving a car and will find his way safely, without conscious thought, through thick traffic where it would be next to impossible for a novice to drive. A racing driver perhaps gets less thrill at eighty per than a school kid learning to drive, does at forty.

Now you claim to have majored science in school. (Just what science or sciences you do not state.) We are not all so lucky as to have had that chance much less the ability. I like science in all its branches possibly as much as you, but never had the chance to study them, granting that I would have had the ability to assimilate them. My schooling extended only to the limits of a one-room country school house, plus what I have picked up from periodicals and experience. In math, for instance, my knowledge extends to a smattering of algebra. Consequently, how do you think I like a story with several stanzas of mathematical calculation? Well, here's what I am compelled to do. I just skip it and think, "Well, I guess the author must be right, so I'll read the rest of the story and see what happens." I doubt if there are more than ten out of a hundred readers who do otherwise.

Many are the small gleanings of knowledge I have gotten from science-fiction stories. They are one of the main reasons I like science-fiction. But when the science is entirely over my head, I gain no knowledge and the fact that those parts were not understandable greatly detracts from the enjoyment of the tale.

I have often thought of plots which to my mind would make a very interesting science-fiction story. I would

like to write them into a story, but I have always realized that I would not have sufficient science, not to mention, "English slinging" ability to convince Ye Olde Editor that the story was worthy of use in our magazine.

My reading consists of about seventeen magazines including monthly and bi-monthly and quarterly. All but four are more or less science-fiction in contents. So in closing, I would suggest to both the Ed. and authors that, for the good of the magazine, make your science understandable to the majority of the readers, and those who don't get enough that way undoubtedly have or can afford the resources for higher science.

After all, true science is not and can never be fictional science.

A PESSIMISTIC VIEW-POINT

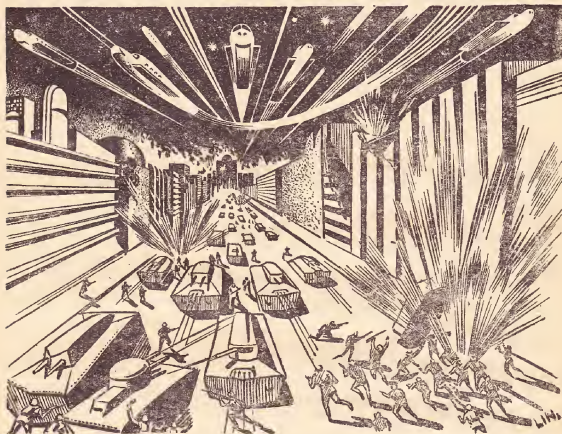
by LOUIS WILMOTT

I 'VE been reading your magazine and other books similar to it for years, and I used to appreciate all your ravings about how wonderful science is and how it has brought us up from the cave-men's days, etc. But did you ever figure that science is also doing its darnedest to destroy the world? Through the aid of science, terrible weapons are being devised to wipe out entire cities in a few hours—killing millions of helpless people. The world is in the greatest war in history. Science has made it the most horrible—and I dread to think of how long civilization can last.

I think the trouble lies in the fact that men are not yet ready for great knowledge. They are still primarily lusty animals, bent on death and destruction. I think the world would be much better off with a very minimum of scientific discovery and invention.

Science from Syracuse

By POLTON CROSS



It was the most terrific war ever staged on Earth!

The long-dead city of Syracuse sends to the New York of 1960 A.D., Archimedes—greatest scientific mind of all the ages! He promises to bring the world to a state of super-civilization—but why then did he cause the world's most terrible war?

FOREWORD

IN this year of 1960 there are possibly some of you who do not fully understand the real circumstances connected with the One Week's War which left a devastated world in the control of implacable scientists. Some of you will likewise be wondering why there reposes in the center of newly built New York City

a railed-off portion in which stand a few buildings resembling those of ancient Greece. Still more must some of you wonder why in a solid block of four buildings *one* is missing and gapes like an empty tooth socket.

The facts may be garbled in the proper record when it comes to be written, therefore the narrative of the scientist himself who caused the trouble is set out here. Recently, this rec-

ord of his aims and experiences, written in his own hand, was released from official custody and to me as instrumental in bringing about his destruction, was given the task of patching up the parts left unclear.

This I have done to the best of my ability. I am no journalist. I used to be a police officer—Officer James Baystoke—until my mistaken notions of this scientist's greatness led me into other fields.

That which follows is the record of the scientist himself, and you will find it, I think, a record unexcelled in history for its scientific implication and obvious revelation of a cold-blooded egotist.

FROM OUT OF TIME

I AM writing this record mainly to reassure myself—if any reassurance be needed—that the men and women of this year of 1955 are gullible fools. Or maybe it is their lack of scientific knowledge that makes them so.

For instance, I caused a tremendous commotion when I first appeared in Times Square, New York City, on July 14, 1955. To a certain extent, I can understand it. I suppose it did look strange to the uneducated to behold an object like an upright glass coffin emerging out of thin air, gradually becoming solid, and then holding up a converging stream of traffic from all points of the compass.

I closed my energy switches and a side in my machine opened. My interest in the people, the buildings, the queer type of vehicles, and so on, was cut short by the arrival of an officious individual with a badge on his tunic and a peaked cap. . . . I could not understand a word he said. He did not talk my native Greek, so I listened in patience until his tirade was over—then I stated quietly:

"I am Archimedes of Syracuse, situated in West Greece. . . ." I repeated it over and over again in the hope that it might penetrate. I think my name "Archimedes" stirred something in his unerudite brain. I could not expect much, after all. He was clearly no intellectual. He had none of my development of forehead, for instance. He did not even possess a beard like mine, nor the easy Grecian raiment.

After a great deal of pointless jabbering, he gave some kind of order. My machine was hoisted onto a truck, a process I watched with considerable anxiety; then I was motioned to sit in the truck beside it. I obeyed, and the very efficient young man in the tunic settled beside me. Then we started off for some unknown destination.

As we went, I had the opportunity to study the design and architecture of the city, very different from my own Syracuse, but not at all as efficient as I had anticipated. It irritated me to find so little real evidence of good use being made of my original conceptions of the pulley, hydrostatics, and so forth. That short journey did much to convince me of the poor brain power of my new-found associates.

Finally I was conducted to a solemn-looking kind of building—but before I went inside it, I took the precaution of locking the switches on my machine. I could not afford to have inexperienced hands tampering with it. It had carried me this far through Time and might need to carry me yet further.

Inside the building, a man with a badge behind a high desk reeled off more unintelligible questions, and he seemed to empurple slightly as my young captor gave my name very clearly. But why dwell on the unreasonable actions of the men with the badges? They thrust me into a cold room with bars all around it. I was left

to meditate on the decadency of what I had believed would be an advanced civilization.

It was probably a matter of some hours later when a group of men were shown into my cell. I was immediately impressed. All of them had keen eyes and good cranial development. I realized I might at last gain some information—or at least explain my own position to them. The hope was realized when, after I had greeted them, one of them spoke in my own tongue. He spoke it with slight differences and truncations, but intelligibly enough.

"I am Dr. Nathan, Professor of Ancient Languages. . . . You have, I understand, insisted on the fact that you are Archimedes of Syracuse?"

"I *am* Archimedes!" I retorted. "But nobody seems to understand my language. You are the first."

He told me—with some scepticism, I thought—that this was America, that the people used the English tongue, and that it was 1955 Anno Domini. He told me a lot of other things, too, which only served to confirm my preconceived belief of an unintelligent age.

"This is not—not a hoax?" Dr. Nathan asked me quietly, as I pondered. "Dozens of times a year, hoaxes are perpetrated, especially scientific ones, with the specific idea of gaining money from a gullible public."

Hoax! I, Archimedes, a hoax? I think I showed my anger clearly, for Dr. Nathan hurried to explain. "Perhaps you do not realize how amazing all this is. You are supposed to belong to a period nearly two hundred years before the birth of Christ—and yet you are here! How did you do it?"

It was only then that I began to appreciate the bewildering fact that these so-called efficient beings of 1955 A.D. had no idea of how to travel in Time. Dr. Nathan told me—and in-

deed later showed me—records to prove that historians had believed me killed in a market place by invading Romans while I was studying a problem marked out in the sand. If nothing else was developed, at least imagination was!

"I traveled through Time," I told my hearers firmly. "Is that so difficult to understand? My machine merged into what you call Times Square. Obviously orbital and axial revolution of the Earth shifted my position on the planet's surface, which explains my arrival in America instead of Greece. As to the scientific details—"

Dr. Nathan interrupted me. "The scientific details are very important, and for that reason are better explained before a gathering of the nation's greatest scientists. In the meantime, your Time Machine has been removed to the safety of the Science Institute. While your case is thoroughly investigated, Professor Archimedes—"

"*Counsellor* Archimedes!" I scornfully corrected.

"Counsellor," he apologized gravely. "While we examine matters, you will have every courtesy our social sphere can offer. If everything is genuine, all honor must—and will be—accorded to you as the greatest scientist that ever lived. . . ."

I could hardly credit it, but they still doubted me. I did not argue then, because it did not suit my purpose. I went with them to a place they called a hotel—extremely comfortable I confess—and thereafter spent my time giving interviews to an interpreter who in turn churned out my words verbatim for the presses.

Then there were movie-machines, televisors, and other devices, which, though intricate in themselves, had stopped far short of the possibilities I had visualized for them when first

conceiving them. I saw all around me the real need for advancement.

But that could come later.

"WAR IS NECESSARY!"

EVIDENTLY my associates were ultimately satisfied with my genuineness, for they asked me to attend a banquet of scientists at which I was to be the guest of honor. In the two weeks that had elapsed, I had learned to speak the English language fairly well and so was able to converse directly with most of the men and women whom I met.

Many of them seemed rather in awe of me, a fact I could well understand, since I realized I was considered the father of all the sciences. It rather disturbed me to find that some of the misguided newspaper men insisted on coupling me with a bath from which I had arisen without raiment to run through the streets of Syracuse shouting "Eureka!" A gross libel indeed upon my discoveries of hydrostatics and equilibristic pressure.

At the banquet I was toasted and feted freely, and then was asked to explain myself. How had I crossed Time? I rose, choosing what words I should use to make myself clear to these so-called scientists.

"Space-time and matter are inseparably interlinked," I told them. "But while we move freely in space—realizing also that to do so we must also move in Time—we cannot imagine how to move in Time without encompassing the corresponding amount of space with it. For instance, you might decide that to cover 500 miles would occupy about an hour of so-called Time . . . but to cover 500 *hours* and use no space at all would, to you, seem to consist of being motionless while the time elapsed. Yet even then you would be moving in space on the earth's surface. Your own body would

be giving off energy, moving forces. You would *still* be moving in space, though not in any measurable fashion. . . .

"To hurdle Time, therefore, without involving any great quantity of space, and to keep conscious while doing it, involves a knowledge of atomic physics. You know—from my own original postulation indeed—that atomic time, due entirely to relative smallness, passes through a thousand years or so whilst we of the macrocosmic universe occupy but a second. The different relative outlook and vibratory speed of the matter in the Macrocosm causes it.

"Once I realized this fact, I saw that my problem ascended into the realms of pure physics. What I had to do was determine the vibratory rate of atomic constitutions and duplicate that vibratory rate, thereby making myself and my surroundings vibrate at a speed similar to that in the atomic world. I finally accomplished it. I found, with my body incased inside a machine embodying atomic vibrations, that I became, as it were, part of a hyper-macrocosm. Around me, ordinary time appeared a matter of vast hundreds-of-years leaps instead of the gradual procession of minute following minute.

"I had completed my invention when the Roman invasion of Syracuse began. I was studying out my exact mathematical theorem in the sand of the market place when I heard of the legions coming. I departed hastily—so hastily, indeed, that I had little time to determine whither I would go. I found when the Time-leap had ended that I had arrived here."

FROM the expressions of those around me, I could tell that none save the really profound physicists knew exactly what I was talking

SF1

about. But I had told them the truth, at least insofar as the science went. I had not told them my exact motives for all this, because I did not deem it wise.

"There is only one drawback," I resumed, after a silence. "Time-travel is a one-way journey. It is quite impossible to move into the past because the make-up of the physical world prevents it. One can only move futurewards, to a gradual and greater disorganization. One can no more travel backwards in Time than one can force an oak tree to return to an acorn. So, my friends, I am with you until I choose to journey further into the future."

At that I sat down, noting what effect I had produced, a pretty strong one, judging from the talking that went on. Most of it was so rapid that my newly acquired knowledge of the language did not help me much. But after a while the Master of Ceremonies arose and bowed to me gravely.

"Counsellor Archimedes, you are wisely named," he said. "And we consider it is our great fortune that you happened to pick our age of all the possible ages you might have landed in. You have, rightly perhaps, called our world badly developed—badly organized. You deplore the use that has been made of your original inventions . . . but at least you must admit that it is far in excess of the amenities of your own Greece?"

"To a certain extent," I replied pondering. "But such inventions as you have—radio, television, flying machines, automobiles, steam-driven trains, and so on, are but devices which I urged my own men of Greece to use. My efforts to do it got me labeled as a mecmancer. You have not, for instance, got a destructive ray amongst your armaments, such as I loaned to the hordes opposing the Ro-

mans? History speaks of a burning glass. Actually it was a projector generating etheric vibrations. So you see, you have not progressed very far.

"In this age," I finished quietly, "I believe you will be open-minded enough to try new ideas—ideas which will straighten out your present haphazard conditions. For instance, I believe I am right in perceiving you all live under the shadow of war?"

"We live in an uneasy peace," the M.C. admitted with a sigh. "We have two great wars to our shame—and a third is not impossible, as what is known as the Fifth Power gathers momentum and armaments for the real Armageddon. To progress in face of incessant threat of war is not at all easy. But you, Archimedes," he went on urgently, "might well straighten out the tangle. After all, you are the greatest scientist of all time."

I do not think anybody guessed my inner thoughts as I replied.

"I will do what I can, willingly. Science must expand. Get me into contact with your present rulers and I will use my knowledge to your benefit. You have that assurance."

I WAS rather surprised to note the speed with which scientists and public bodies took up my offer of assistance. Within a week, I had interviews with the President of America himself. I was also transported to other countries to discuss with rulers, and there followed a series of conferences from which there emerged the decision to appoint me World Counsellor. As the President of America himself said, when making the announcement:

"Perhaps what several unscientific men have failed to do, one scientific man can accomplish."

I did not regard his remark as flattery, but as a simple truth. Inside of

a month, therefore, I was World Counsellor and was given a big executive building in the middle of New York to conduct my labors. My first step was to decide how to stop impending war with the Fifth Power.

I confess here that I had known right from the start what my decision would be, but for obvious reasons, I spent a lot of time apparently brooding over the reports of world conditions which were all diverted to my executive headquarters. When finally I made my report to the world over the radio, I am afraid I shocked everybody except the Fifth Power—for I stated that war was not an issue to be avoided but to be faced. I told the people plainly that war—violent, brief and relentless—was the only true foundation of a new and lasting civilization.

As I had expected, this started a storm . . . but also as I had expected, the poor fools clung rigidly to the treaty they had signed which gave me absolute authority as World Counsellor. The idea of breaking their treaty obligations when it suited them never dawned on them, I think. Nations had sworn to abide by my decisions regarding matters of progress—probably believing they would have an easy rise to peace and security while I did all the work . . . therefore my decision that war was necessary pleased nobody except the Fifth Power.

I faced tirades from the President, insults from press and public alike—but such was my position, I was protected from actual physical attack by a perpetual strong-arm guard. . . .

I had said that war was necessary before a real civilization could begin—but I had not said when the war was to commence. I knew it would be soon, for the avaricious Fifth Power was ready to strike the moment its strategic maneuvers were completed.

Even from my own staff in the executive building, I faced a good deal of veiled invective—in particular from my third secretary whom I was surprised to discover was actually the young police officer who had treated me so courteously on my arrival. I well recall how angry he seemed whilst upbraiding me for my decisions.

“Do you realize what you have done sir?” he demanded of me, his young face flushed. “You’ve destroyed the trust of all right-thinking people! They put you in virtual power because of your scientific prowess, and the first thing you do is betray them! I love science, and always have done so, which is one reason why I gave up ordinary work as a police officer to become employed in this great organization. I wanted to feel I was helping along the birth of a new world. And what do you do? You decide to destroy it!”

“You are very young,” I told him gravely. “Do you not see that a world must first be purged of all sources of disorder before it can really build securely?”

“I see that, yes—but there is no legitimate reason for ordering massacre and barbarism to accomplish it!”

I said, “When you realize that human beings are so many masses of electricity constantly accumulating to no purpose, you will have little compunction about destroying the lot in order to bring a better world into being. The world appointed me Counsellor—and the world must realize that perfection only comes the hard way.”

He stood looking at me, obviously distraught. Then he burst out:

“I no longer believe you give two hoots about advancing our age! Nor do I credit your seeming benevolence any longer! I believe you have some

reason for all this—some scientific reason you've never revealed."

Just for a moment, I wondered if he had really penetrated to the exact reason for my methods—then I realized the impossibility of it. But I told myself, here was a young man who was not quite such a gullible fool as the rest. I answered him quietly enough.

"You are in no position to question your superior, Baystoke. Return to your work. And remember that whatever you may think or do, you will always be watched."

He went out without a word. When I thought back on the conversation, it made me smile a little. So young a man challenging me! Me—Archimedes!

FEW SURVIVORS!

THE greatest scientist that ever lived! as these fools would know before I finished with them. What circumstance had prevented me from doing in my own age should certainly not prevent me here. Of that I was determined.

My edict that war was necessary started a sudden increase in armament production and mobilization of man and woman power. I had fully expected that and stressed constantly the necessity to rid the world of dangerous elements before a real start could be made. The idea seemed to impress itself on the people and they actually began to see a certain virtue in what they were doing.

For myself, I made special plans. I discovered the best scientific engineers in the country and outlined plans to them—plans for weapons which in the hands of the rest of the world would have been asking for the Earth itself to be blown out of its orbit. Most of the inventions I had worked out were ramifications of the

somewhat childish ideas prevalent in this age.

After all, I could hardly explain to ordinary military chiefs what was meant by atomic force, generation of negative potentials, space-warp, and similar devices—so I had to rely on the limited but fairly quick up-take of the minds of the engineers I engaged. I took good care to swear them to secrecy, too.

At work in special laboratories—ostensibly for research—they manufactured a series of machines utilizing the forces I have named, forces quite beyond the comprehension of the dolts of this age. When the machines were completed, I had them installed in the deep basement of the executive building, thereby securing immediate safety for myself and my staff. Whatever violent course the impending war took, we were completely protected.

Somehow, though, the news of these inventions leaked out. The President demanded explanations. I made it clear that the devices were secret scientific weapons for our own use in destroying the Fifth Power if ordinary military and economic means proved futile. I think the idea of a "secret weapon" convinced the President; it seemed that most past wars had implied, but never brought forth, a secret weapon. What the President did *not* know—in fact what nobody knew—was that the devices were for my own use only.

As I had anticipated, I had only just enough time to complete my plans when the Fifth Power struck. Immediately, I gave orders to my trained technicians in the basement, and machinery came into action, causing the executive building to become surrounded in a deep violet glow.

Baystoke was the only one with me when the onslaught began. We stood together at the window watching the

battle taking place in the air, listening to the whine of bombs and their shattering detonations. I think my unmoved, thoughtful expression as I surveyed the destruction rather upset my former young devotee. He swung on me with sudden fury.

"Counsellor, you're a devil!" he cried, his eyes blazing. "Look down there—! A mighty city filled with fighting people—a city being destroyed, all to gratify your cockeyed notions on building a new civilization! So it is in probably nearly every city in the world. So it will go until munitions are exhausted. . . ."

"Which will be in about a week," I told him. "Computation of war potential and munition reserves has shown me there will be a war of unparalleled violence for about a week—then peace through lack of materials, which I have cut off at every source."

"And you smile!" Baystoke cried. "Anyway, what makes you think we can last for seven days? We might be bombed out of existence any moment."

I nodded to the bluish screen outside. "Not while that exists, my petulant young friend. This building is protected by a film of force on all sides and above. You are aware of the simple principle of explosion? You know that atomic aggregates change their paths with such terrific speed that they blow their structure asunder? Well, this force-screen, generated in the building basement, throws a neutral current through any such tendency. Therefore, bombs dropped here will not explode. They will penetrate the screen, yes—but nothing more since they fall in between neutralizing curtains."

Baystoke shouted, "Then why the devil aren't our forces equipped with such devices?"

"And prolong the war? Make one side win? No. . . . In reconstruction, all parties must start equal." I smiled reflectively. "You see, when this war is over, I shall be the master of the world. That is right, because I have the greatest scientific knowledge of any living man—and the world knows it. If I find the war drags on too long, there are things I can do to hasten its conclusion."

"Such as?"

I shrugged. "I can use again the heat rays I used in Syracuse; I can release atomic force, adopt mind paralyzers. Do many things. . . . But I do not think it will become necessary."

Baystoke was silent for a moment, studying the onslaught outside. Then he eyed me again.

"What gratification will you get out of being master of the earth, if there is nobody left in it to master, that is. . . ."

"There will be some," I answered ambiguously. "Besides, mastery of the world is only the commencement of real progress—the dawn of the age I tried to establish in my native time and country but was prevented by there being so many people against me. Here it will be different. Science such as I possess will reach out—*can* reach out—to the furthest stars. . . ."

To my surprise, Baystoke turned away abruptly.

"Is it possible to walk through this radiation screen?" he asked curtly, and as I nodded he went on. "I've seen all I want to see of Archimedes, the benevolent scientist aiming at setting the world to rights. I prefer to fight with my fellow men—die with them if need be . . . and if I don't die, maybe I'll even fight you someday!"

"Your knowledge against mine?" I asked him pityingly.

HE nodded grimly. "Yeah. Someday I'm going to find out just why you did all this. . . ."

Before I could reply, he was gone, but I made a mental note that if this disillusioned young man crossed my path again, it would perhaps be better to have him removed. Of course I had a reason for all this—but the time for its revelation was not yet. . . .

For a trifle over a week, as I had computed, the war raged—and it was surely the most terrific war ever staged on earth. Though I watched it daily, though I knew my staff in the building thought me completely mad but did not dare to say so, I was not particularly moved by the scenes of destruction and suffering constantly on the increase. Maybe it is something in my makeup. I have heard it said that the true scientist is totally without emotion—forever an implacable opportunist bent on progress at whatever cost. Perhaps that is my nature. I must confess that suffering in others has never stirred me.

Ultimately, the ammunition from every source ran out, as I had arranged it should. I gave orders for ambulance and rescue work to be carried out immediately, and began a gathering of radio news reports from different parts of the world.

Where is the need for me to detail what followed when those of you who survived know it full well? The war had gone according to my plan and had left a devastated world with no victor—except me. All that was left were masses of shattered cities and wandering survivors.

My deeper laid plans came to the fore now. Disease was checked rapidly by the medical devices I offered; people were housed in temporary habitations. Then I sent forth a fleet of newly constructed long-range planes and gave them direct instructions to

destroy every sign of armament in the world wherever they encountered it—and where did they not encounter it they were to find out by any means they chose where war weapons were still hidden.

That I was master of the survivors in the world was abundantly clear—to them and to me. In most places I had cities re-erected in similar design to the previous ones as time passed by—no more than a matter of months—but in newly erected New York I insisted on certain changes immediately in front of the executive building. Here, rather to the surprise of the architects I employed, I insisted that four buildings be erected in precisely similar design to those in my native Syracuse—a solid block of four.

THE LAST BUILDING

THE completed effect of a block of Grecian buildings in the midst of the newly erected city was rather strange, no doubt—but definitely necessary to my plans. Indeed the buildings had hardly been finished, and left empty at my command, before that for which I was waiting took place.

Possibly quite a few people saw three more Time-machines similar to my own appear from the apparent air one morning in mid New York. I saw to it that my comrades had a far better reception than I had had and gave orders for their machines to be safely put away. Then, after the city had paid homage at my behest, my three comrades and myself went into conclave.

In appearance I imagine there was little to choose between us—nor will I waste time on names, except for Gralicus, leading scientist next to myself. He was the one with whom I talked while our two comrades sat and listened.

"It seems your theory was right, Counsellor," Gralicus observed, looking out over the city. "We allowed the time to elapse as arranged—then as you did not return, we came to the same point as you ordered."

"These fools here thought I came by accident," I smiled. "They showed me some ridiculous legend about the Romans attacking Syracuse, and further showed me reports of a burning-glass attack invented by me. I traded on it by saying it was a death ray and instilled a healthy respect of my powers thereby. What they do not know is that I came here because an examination of future time-development showed clearly it was a good age in which to start the progressive action impossible in our own age and time."

"How true," Gralicus sighed. "We four are scientists beyond the imagination of such fools as those in our own time. To journey into the future and find a land wherein there is the material for active progress was a stroke worthy of your supreme genius, Counsellor. And you have done well, obviously. The people are to heel."

"War saw to that," I murmured. "I had to make them fight in order to lessen the possible number of opposers. Still in the guise of a peace-maker, I had all armaments destroyed, so as to be certain there can be no dangerous attack at any time. Lastly, only a war and necessity for reconstruction could make it seem logical for me to reproduce our four most important Grecian buildings right in the center of this city."

Gralicus gazed down on them through the window.

"Excellent work!" he murmured. "And now—"

"Now," I told him grimly, "there is nothing to stop us. The conquest of the world is here; next we establish a

dynasty in the greater spaces. I had those buildings made that way to obviate fresh plans. We know already that each building—as we intended in Syracuse until law stopped our efforts—is significant in itself, that each will contain special machinery—one, two, three, and four. The first for cosmic machines, the second for special radio work, the third for X-ray telescopic work, and the fourth for actual space-projectile work. Our machines will be better than those we tried back home. Fools though the people of this age are, they are excellent machine-builders. That I admit."

Gralicus said, "You plan then to contact other worlds, conquer space, master these other worlds with the scientific appliances you have devised?"

"The realization of our dream," I breathed. "The domination of a universe by the greatest scientists of this or any other age!"

WITH my scientific friends to aid me, I was able to devote myself to more complex problems and leave the control of the people to them. Gralicus conscripted the people for machine-room work. He organized it so that the workers built machinery in the Grecian buildings without knowing the purpose to which they worked. What they did realize, I think, was that to defeat our rule was impossible. It pleased me to see the dull apathy which attended their obedience to orders.

In the machine-rooms, the engineers built the sections of machines which I had devised. There were space-radio transmitters and receivers, etheric vibrators on a vast scale, destructive forces that could reach to Pluto and beyond if need be. Then there were astronomical devices of advanced design, cradlework for the

holding of the first space-projectile to be driven by super-explosive . . . and so forth. I planned to extract the ultimate possible benefits out of physics, astronomy, and mathematics. I planned to master space, space-time, and matter itself. How is it possible to put in this record the whole scientific detail, when none possesses such a brain as I to understand it?

I find, however, that this record is becoming a nuisance to me with so many problems on my hands. I will continue at a later date.

Some months have passed since I put down the record of my conquests. I return to my review of events with a rather troubled mind. For a reason I cannot understand, I believe the people of this age resent my domination—and that of my comrades. But why? Surely it is the law? One master—one people?

No matter. They can do nothing. The first, second, and fourth Grecian buildings are now completed with machinery. I have inspected each one and am well satisfied. The third building, containing the X-ray telescopic devices, is almost finished. There are details to complete which will require the close inspection of myself and comrades. The sooner it is done, the better, for the sooner can our conquest then begin.

Strange! I perceive Gralicus approaching the executive building, and in obvious hurry too. I will resume when I know what news he brings.

Gralicus has brought disturbing news indeed. He tells me there are signs of active revolt among the people, and though there is no direct evidence of it, it would seem that my former secretary Baystoke is connected with it. I have little doubt that Gralicus will track the trouble down.

But time is moving. I have Building 3 to inspect. Gralicus has urged an

early examination and is waiting there now with our two comrades. I will have to again postpone this writing.

NOTE BY JAMES BAYSTOKE

SUCH are the last words Archimedes was ever destined to pen in this age and time! He imagined that by bringing a world to its knees, and that by sheer arrogance and scientific power, he could master a universe. Perhaps he could have done—and therein lay deadly danger. To defeat his mechanical ingenuity was impossible—but I, Baystoke, had not been idle, being aware for some time of the real ambitions of Archimedes.

During the War, the Science Institute containing his Time Machine was bombed. The machine, of immensely hard construction, dropped into the bomb crater and became covered with debris. Later, when with others I was employed in rebuilding the city, it was my luck to come across it. By night, I and a party of friends spirited the machine to a group of physicists known to us to be in opposition to Archimedes' rule. We had the chance to study the machine in detail.

It finally became obvious to us how it worked—but it was also obvious that to perhaps attract Archimedes and his three colleagues into a machine and set them off into Time was next to impossible. They would be too wary. Yet this *was* the solution, I was convinced—for Archimedes himself had said Time was a one-way track. Therefore, hurled into the future, he and his comrades could never return.

What could we do?

We only found out when we were set to work erecting machinery in the Grecian buildings. We had noted how, on the completion of each building's machinery, it was thoroughly exam-

ined by the four rulers. Suppose the last building to be finished were naught but a giant Time-Machine? At a casual glance, all machinery looks alike. We could probably erect time-machine apparatus and let it pass for astronomical machinery until close inspection—then it would not matter

Simply, this is what we did. We found willing helpers in the machine rooms who duplicated the time-machinery on a giant scale. Others of us replaced the guards, and so finally we

were ready. When Archimedes and his three men stepped into the building on that fated morning for the examination, nothing remained but to throw the remote control switch.

The building, the machinery, and the men inside it simply vanished—hurled some 4,000 years into the future from which they could never come back. What they do there is no concern of ours. We have rid the world of a grim danger, and therein lies our victory.

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THE FAN MAGS

AS per our regular custom in this department, every other issue, we herewith review some of the latest science-fiction fan magazines. These publications are of special interest to fans, and if you like science-fiction and fantasy, we heartily suggest that you avail yourself of some fan magazines right away! The most active fans in the field find them indispensable. Here they are:

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element of science-fiction, featuring intelligent articles by leading fan writers. A dime will bring you a sample copy—and believe us, it's worth more!

STARDUST is still the leader in the fan mag field—because it's a professionally printed magazine of handy coat-pocket size, with an attractive cover. This semi-pro, published at 2609 Argyle St., Chicago, Ill., sells for 15c per copy, and features fiction and articles of special interest by top-fame authors—such as Robert Moore Williams, Raymond A. Palmer, Neil R. Jones, and Jack Williamson. About 30 pages, small type.

THE DAMN THING. Yes, trust the California boys to think up something different! T. Bruce Yerke, Box 6475 Metropolitan Station, Los Angeles, has just put out this really unique large-sized mimeographed magazine—in green ink. The lads in the land of unusual weather have secured a combination of articles both of a panning and humorous nature—and we mean they're funny. For a dime you can avail yourself of fandom's newest and screwiest publication.

NEW FANDOM is still an old stand-by. This mimeod mag comes from 137-07 32nd Ave., Flushing, New York, and sells for a dime. Here you will find absorbing articles by the

fans who know their science-fiction best. You can learn a lot of the inside "dope" by reading this publication.

PLUTO "For the Discriminating Snide," whatever a Snide is. However, that's the name of fandom's most beautifully prepared magazine—believe it or not, it's marvelously mimeographed in *five* colors! There are numerous cuts throughout, and many novel special features, including cartoons of a science-fictional nature, and "Jokes from Other Planets." It's the effort of the Literature, Science, and Hobbies Club of Decker, Indiana, and is a bargain at a dime a throw. Forty pages of top-notch material. We guarantee you'll read it through at one sitting.

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"THE CHICON"

By Earle Korshak

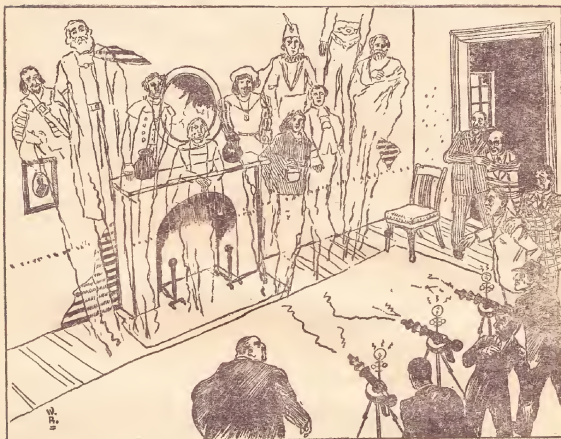
DURING the Labor Day Holidays there met in Chicago some one hundred and fifty rabid science-fiction enthusiasts, to take part in meetings and get-togeth-

ers—in a Masquerade Party, a banquet in honor of Edward E. "Sky-lark" Smith, and in fan business discussions, which made up the 1940 World Science Fiction Convention, known as the "Chicon." These fans and professionals, including editors, fantasy authors, and fantasy artists, gathered together at the Convention from every part of the United States. Joyful indeed were their greetings, as fans met old pen-pals, as critics met the authors of the stories they enjoyed or disliked, as editors met authors and talked shop, and as authors and fans talked over plots in order to write new and better stories.

Of the galaxy of fans present one could see Forrest J. Ackerman, Morajo, Paul Freehafer, and Pogo, all who hailed from Los Angeles. There too, were Art Widner, Gertrude Kuslan, Hyman Tiger, Julius Unger, Robert W. Lowndes, Jack Speer, Milton A. Rothman, Donald A. Wollheim, and Robert A. Madle. Running around on various errands were Jack Chapman Miske, Dale Tarr, Donn Brazier, Marvis Manning, Ted Dikty, Fred Shroyer, E. Everett Evans, Olon Wiggins, and Lew Martin. These fans, and other equally important ones, too numerous to mention, were meeting or renewing their acquaintances with the Chicago fans, and the "braintrusts" of the Convention, the Executives of the Illini Fantasy Ficioneers. This group, which sponsored the Convention, included the Director, Bob Tucker; Mark Reinsberg, the Chairman of the Convention Committee; Erle Korshak, Secretary and Treasurer of the Illini Fantasy Ficioneers, who also acted as Master of Ceremonies and Auctioneer of the affair; Richard I. Meyer, Chairman of the Program Committee; and George Tullis, the Convention Recording Secretary.

Wisdom of the Dead

By ED EARL REPP



They seemed to float nebulously up from the floor!

The War of 1970 was tearing down the foundations of civilization in the name of Democracy—with both sides fighting to save it! The little scientist Benjamin knew that a forceful peace plan was necessary —so he enlisted the ingenuity of Socrates and Alexander Hamilton, called back from the land of Shadows!

WHILE the capital of the Combined Governments of the Western Hemisphere slept, two men worked in a warehouse loft on Forty Second Place. Dr. Frank Benjamin ran nervous hands through his bristling white hair and for the fiftieth time that night replaced his pincenez on the bridge of his straight, gaunt nose. Coatless, with sleeves

rolled up above white, slender fore-arms, and his slight body attired in the black broadcloth he always wore, Benjamin looked like a purveyor of the gospel who had suddenly decided to become a mechanic.

But there was nothing aimless in the way he installed the last of the twenty huge, T-shaped vacuum tubes in its socket. The little scientist knew

what he was doing. And as Bruce Stebbins watched these last moves, he wondered at the energy that had driven Benjamin to assemble, in a few short weeks, the apparatus whose use he had been theorizing on all his life.

"It's finished," Dr. Benjamin said. "I'm glad Herm Rohan doesn't know about it."

Stebbins' face went grim at mention of the munitions magnate's name. "Yes," he breathed. "He'd hire you to help Nelm Smith invent new ways of killing people now that he has the Third Great War well under way . . . or at least he'd see you didn't do anything like this." Stebbins waved a hand at the battery of gigantic coils marching down one side of the loft, their towering, ten-foot height encased in insulating coverings of gleaming, black *porcelex*. Around their bases and overflowing to fill half the loft was a mass of equipment resembling a common radio broadcast receiver—magnified several hundred times as to size. Mammoth cables wound in and through it like a tangled mass of yellow and brown pythons. The T-shaped vacuum tubes were arranged in a line along the outer edge of the apparatus. Their protruding arms were directed at a series of crucibles, each with a separate furnace, and containing a thick, green liquid which supported an almost transparent ball. A control board faced Benjamin, its dial-covered height towering above him.

Benjamin took a final look at the machine, and then turned away. His shoulders sagged with weariness, but a deathless light gleamed in his eyes. He nodded to the radio that with two cots, a table, and two chairs, occupied the only clear space in the loft.

"Speaking of Herm Rohan and Nelm Smith," he said, "let's see what the news is. We've done nothing but

eat and work since I resigned from the university three weeks ago and jerked you out of your own classes to come here and help me think of something besides death and destruction."

Stebbins flicked a switch to *Standard Broadcast*. The newscaster's voice joined them in the echoing loft. "Good evening, friends. It is late for this, the last of our day's newscasts. But time no longer matters in a world gone mad. It is my unpleasant duty to help you face the fact that our civilization, as we know it, may be gasping for its last breath. Yesterday, President Rutherford's final attempt to obtain a vote of confidence for his peace proposals to the enemy was defeated by a close vote in both houses of Congress. And life is cheap enough—even my life—for me to say I'm convinced powerful undercover influence was brought to bear to swing those votes toward a furtherance of the war . . . and the sale of death to ourselves and to the enemy!

"For let us face it. The enemy obtains its weapons from the same source we do—a manufacturer somewhere within our own borders! First there was the radio bomb, whose full plans and specifications were placed in the enemy's hands two days after our own government bought up full patents on it. And now the *Actino-thermal* projector, a compact apparatus for projecting a beam which eats out its victim's eyes and nerves, leaving him a quivering, lifeless pulp, dropping him into eternity with a minute's terrible agony. Both these weapons are the inventions of one man and developed at the order of another man, a man gone mad with greed, who would sacrifice a world for gold.

"First there was the World War. Then the War of 1939. And now this, the Third Great War in the year 1970.

I would like to rename it! Let us call it Herm Rohan's War to . . ."

A sharp click cut off the broadcaster's voice, and Stebbins' eyes met Benjamin's.

"A brave man," Benjamin said. "There are a few who know the facts."

Stebbins' glance went back to the doctor's apparatus. "You face the Academy tomorrow," he said half to himself. "Will they approve?"

Benjamin shrugged. "They are scientists, philosophers, men of vision. They will understand. And when they give me their endorsement, the government should allow me the current I need—an amount equal to the total consumption of this city. Then, Bruce . . . then we will talk with Socrates."

MORNING sunlight disclosed the dark fatigue circles beneath Dr. Frank Benjamin's eyes and the tired stoop of his frail body within his baggy, black broadcloth as he faced the sea of faces in the Academy's assembly hall.

"You all know what is going on in this world of ours," he began. "I won't remind you of it. But I will tell you what we can do about it. Three centuries ago some people left their homeland because they didn't like the way they were being treated and went to a new country. They set up their own government. Their wisest men got together and constructed a constitution, a truly noble document. And it worked! Do you know why? Because it was brand new. They had shaken the dust of prejudice, intolerance, and greed from their feet and started fresh. A new plan like that, on a scale large enough to include the world, would work for us now if we had it. The enemy would listen. They'd be only too glad to. They're 'fighting for democracy' the same as we are. We're deadlocked in a battle for the same

thing, a thing we could both have if we'd simply stop and talk it over."

A tall, stooped figure rose in the third row. His pale, cadaverous face seemed almost fleshless. Eyes like flashes of light across shining steel blazed from deep sockets, and his thin lips twisted sarcastically as he spoke. "Mr. Chairman . . ."

"Dr. Nelm Smith has the floor," the chair responded instantly.

"This little man is wasting our time," Smith said in a piercing voice. "President Rutherford had some such idea as this, but Congress defeated his plan. We have more important things to discuss than some hazy political scheme of which the government has always shown its disapproval." Cries of assent followed his words.

Another member rose. "Dr. Benjamin said he had something new to place before us. What he's talking about now has been relegated to the barber shops and pool parlors for discussion several days ago. I move we get on with the other business."

Several were on their feet now, and as Benjamin looked at them he saw with a tight smile that they were placed strategically throughout the audience. Herm Rohan was ready for any eventuality. He controlled the radio newscasts, he pulled the strings that made Congress jump, and now Benjamin could recognize his influence here in the Academy of Science.

The chairman turned to him. "If you have something worthy of our consideration," he said, "then continue. If not, we have other business."

For half a minute, Benjamin talked. He fired his words at them like charges from a ray-gun. His voice deepened and filled the hall with sufficient volume to override their rising protest.

"I still say we need a plan!" he

shouted. "But are there any men in this world capable of setting up a new plan? No! They might be wise enough, but they wouldn't be able to lift their feet from the mess we're in—this quagmire of greed, and racial prejudice, fear, and graft! We've stopped looking ahead. But in the past there were men who looked ahead. I propose to bring those men here *now!*"

THE last word hung on the still air within the hall for a second. Then Nelm Smith's laugh broke through. "The man's crazy!"

Other cries took it up: "Throw him out! Get rid of the crackpot! We're wasting time!"

The chairman's gavel finally restored order. "Dr. Benjamin," he said, "your long reputation with the University requires that we give you a sufficient hearing. Do you wish to continue?"

Benjamin's shoulders had sagged a little lower with the outcries. He stared out at these men and saw hostility mirrored everywhere. And of these he had said "scientists, philosophers, men of vision." But perhaps those who would listen were just keeping quiet. Perhaps their minds were still open, unaffected by Nelm Smith and Herm Rohan's other paid sycophants. He took a deep breath.

"All projected energy travels in waves," he began. "The audio-frequencies, that is, sound waves projected on the air, are at the bottom of the scale. Next come the radio waves, electro-magnetic impulses travelling on the ether. The higher frequencies of these radio waves approach the character of light, which according to known theories has been considered as topping the scale. I have gone farther and isolated for experiment a complete range of projected energy

above light—the *energy of thought!*"

A stir of impatience ran through the audience, but Benjamin hurried on. "We are all alive, you and I . . . at least until one of the enemy's new radio bombs drops on us," his eyes sought Nelm Smith's. "And the problem of life I leave to the future. But while we live we project thought energy. And I do know something about that. I can amplify it in the same way light, radio, and sound are amplified and carried by transformed electrical energy. And I can trace it back to its source. With my apparatus I can contact a man's thought, trace it back to the man himself—though he be dead according to our worldly standards—and I can bring that man into being as a thought image.

"I have selected ten men from the history of the past, covering a time space that begins with Socrates and ends with Alexander Hamilton. These ten were the greatest thinkers of all time. Endorse my plan, so the government will allow me an amount of electrical current equal to the consumption of this city, and I'll bring those men into being here and let them have a look at our world and our war. If they can't think out a solution, then civilization is doomed!"

Nelm Smith rose to his feet again. "Mr. Chairman. It seems fairly clear to me that Dr. Benjamin's mind has been affected by his years of experimental work. He's jumped from the realm of fact into the fairyland of fancy. Must we go on listening to this drivel?"

A heavy voice answered him from the front row as a bearded man eased his huge body in the middle seat. "Shut up, Smith, and sit down. I, for one, intend to hear Benjamin out. Maybe he's got something." Here and there a head nodded, and as Nelm Smith shot a quick glance over the as-

semblage and noticed approval of the big man's words, his hand went into his coat pocket with a gesture that was almost too casual. He sat down.

"You may proceed," the chairman said to Benjamin.

But the little scientist's hearing was at an end. For from the east side of the city a sudden terrific explosion could be heard. The Academy assembly hall rocked and shuddered. Men's faces went white. "Radio bombs!" someone shouted. "They've found the range. Get to the cellars!"

The hall emptied itself with a rush as more concussions, like claps of nearby thunder, shook the capital. Nelm Smith was the last to leave. He stared at Benjamin with a sardonic smile, took his hand out of his pocket, and sauntered down the aisle. The brief bombardment had ceased.

AS Dr. Benjamin climbed wearily into his air cruiser on the roof of the Academy, he understood. With a midget broadcaster and a key concealed in his pocket, Smith had contacted Rohan in the latter's gray granite estate somewhere on the rocky, fog-bound Atlantic coast. And Rohan's subsequent bombing of the city had broken up the Academy hearing.

The city was surrounded by insulation walls, lengths of cable suspended from a mile-high degravitated ring and charged with enough current to bring to incandescence any object which touched them. Huge breaks had been torn in these walls by the bombs.

If Rohan was willing to go to such lengths to prevent the promulgating of any plan for peace, what would he do, Benjamin wondered, if he discovered the location of the little scientist's apparatus? Benjamin returned to the warehouse by a roundabout route, keeping a close watch behind him. Once or twice he thought he was

being followed, but managed to elude his pursuers in the maze of the city's air traffic. After securing the ship in its roof hangar, he played his light key over the photo-electric lock on the door and descended to the loft.

Bruce Stebbins met him anxiously. "It looks as if you obtained your hearing just in time, sir." He nodded to the radio. "I just received news that Philadelphia has been annihilated. Nothing left but a smoking crater. The enemy obtained the range and poured in continuous fire from a cruiser flying outside the blockade. When they started bombing the capital here, I thought we were done for. Why do you suppose they stopped?"

Benjamin sat down wearily on a cot. "It wasn't the enemy that bombed the capital, Bruce. It was Herm Rohan."

"Rohan! But why?"

"To break up the Academy hearing. He and Nelm Smith know we've got something."

Stebbins sank down on the cot opposite Benjamin. "But you can get another hearing, can't you? Or does this mean . . .?"

Dr. Benjamin caught the deep feeling in the other's voice, and a tight smile of understanding curved his lips as he replied. "I could get another hearing, yes. And meet with the same opposition I did this time. But we're not licked, Bruce. We're just through asking. From now on we'll take what we want! You'll find four or five packing cases over there in the corner. Start opening them while I finish my calculations. Before morning the city will get a surprise, because we're going to take their current whether they want us to or not."

Midnight had come and gone before Dr. Benjamin and Bruce Stebbins had finished their work. Stebbins,

two hundred pounds of all-American, University fullback, felt as if he'd been dragged through a wringer; and he gazed in astonishment at Benjamin's unstoppable energy. The little scientist had hardly paused even to eat. His calculations finished, they had proceeded to string copper cable across the loft, dozens of gleaming strands of naked, red-gold metal. These had to be insulated from the walls and then connected to a series of metal tubes, several feet in height. From there on, the equipment was a mystery to Stebbins. He simply did as he was told. The cots and table were carried out into the hall and the space they had occupied given over to a nest of transformers. When the two men were through, they stood in the only clear spot in the loft, the few feet of bare floor before the huge control board.

"We'll take current in the same way a broadcast receiver picks up radio energy," Dr. Benjamin explained. "That way they won't be able to locate the drain—for a while." He paused and shut his eyes. To Bruce, the older man's slight body seemed to sway, like a puppet whose strings had gone slack for a moment. He saw then that Benjamin's physical power had long since deserted him and that his strength was almost entirely derived from the drive of his will. That kind of strength might crack with another disappointment or defeat.

"We're ready, Bruce," Dr. Benjamin said.

Stebbins extended his hand and they shook solemnly. Then Benjamin closed a master switch on the board. A low humming sound grew in the copper cables. It increased in intensity as he tuned in the electrical receiver, until the very air within the loft seemed to throb. Benjamin stepped down the board and at the touch of his hand on

the controls, lights sprang up behind calibrated dials.

"First . . . Socrates!" the little man said. His voice had a hollow ring through the pulsing of heavy current, like a command echoing back over the centuries. The furnaces under the crucibles began to glow. Under the bombardment of electronic beams from the vacuum tubes, the translucent balls moved slowly in their green baths, then settled and began to spin. Wordlessly, Benjamin and Stebbins stared at each other, waiting.

Stebbins' eyes suddenly took on a glassy look. Someone tapped Benjamin on the shoulder. "Pardon me," a voice said. "But if you aren't too busy, I'd like to talk to you."

DR. BENJAMIN turned slowly and straightened his pince-nez to look at the figure standing there. The man wasn't tall. He was broad. A fringe of curly white hair and beard framed a bald head, a round ruddy face, a rather large nose, and deep-set staring eyes. His sturdy body was draped in a long flowing mantle of drab color, after the manner of an ancient Greek toga. He faced Benjamin with astonishment, but a snapping twinkle in his eyes showed he was enjoying himself immensely.

"If you can talk, then speak," he said with good-natured truculence. "Where am I? What sort of a devil's workshop have I wandered into?"

"Yes, yes. To be sure . . ." Benjamin mumbled. His glasses fell off and he struggled to replace them.

"He . . . he talks English!" Bruce gasped finally. "I thought he was . . . is . . . a Greek."

Dr. Benjamin's voice was a hushed whisper. "He is. But I allowed for that. Since he is a thought image and his talk is the tangible result of his thinking, then a slight adjustment

SF

here makes his ideas take the form of our language." He turned to Socrates.

"You're no doubt puzzled at all this equipment and at us . . . more than we are at you. I'll explain. The world has grown since you were forced to drink the hemlock, sir, but it hasn't changed much. We are at this moment engaged in a war which, with the improved weapons of the present day, will mean the wiping out of civilization unless it can be stopped. And even if the war is stopped, we won't get anywhere if we stumble on in our present manner. We need a new plan."

While the little scientist talked, Socrates' face smoothed out with thought. His great eyes bored into Benjamin and Stebbins as if they would melt down and extract information from the men themselves.

"That's why I've summoned you here," the Doctor went on. "I intend to bring into being nine other men. You won't know them, with the exception of your student, Plato. But they are thinkers like yourself, men who looked ahead. A dying civilization asks your help. Will you give it?"

The old man nodded sombrely. "Of course. But are we to be here indefinitely?"

Benjamin shook his head. "I'm afraid not. Existence in your present form depends upon this machine and the energy which I am stealing from the power output of the city. There are interests which work against us. If they locate us they will stop at nothing to destroy us."

"Then," Socrates observed, "we'd better get busy."

In the next hour the loft, with its humming, throbbing activity and the men who appeared from nowhere, began to take on a nightmarish quality. Stebbins, ready to drop from fatigue, wondered if he'd already fallen asleep

and was dreaming. As the strange visitors came into being beside the control board he escorted them out into the hall, explaining the situation as best he could.

The first to follow Socrates was a tall, aristocratic young man in a toga, who stalked up to the old philosopher and greeted him as "Master." In his manner, underlying the lordly well-bred surface, was a quality which Bruce could define only as the nearest thing to devout worship one man could feel for another. This was Plato, greatest pupil of Socrates. The others he could only guess at. A man in somber black, whose white thin face was framed by a carefully groomed wig and a high stock, Bruce recognized as Alexander Hamilton. Another in the doublet and hose of the Elizabethan period might have been Francis Bacon. A little man, with a sharp, straight nose and high forehead, looked like a bust Bruce had seen of Voltaire. From there on, he lost track.

When there were ten, Dr. Benjamin came out into the hall and faced them. "I've secured an estate outside the city, gentlemen, where you will find the seclusion necessary for your deliberations. It's stocked with newspapers, books, governmental records . . . everything I could obtain on short notice which could help give you the picture of our world as it is today. If you'll follow me up to the roof, I'll take you there."

Benjamin put his hands on Bruce's shoulders. "You understand the importance of what we're doing?" he asked. "You know that if anyone gets to that machine, the world has lost its chance to hope for a future?"

Bruce nodded. "They won't get to it," he promised. "Not while my cleats are pointing down."

Two nights later, Dr. Benjamin returned. And as Bruce met him at the

stairway leading from the roof he saw the scientist was a walking shell. Defeat lay heavily across his gaunt features.

"I've haunted the President's office," he whispered hopelessly. "It's no use. Most of the secretaries are paid by Rohan. They wouldn't let me get through to Rutherford. And finally they had me thrown out. If our friends from the past do work out a plan, it seems I won't be able to get anyone to listen to it."

"And the war?" Bruce asked.

"Worse!" Bitterness made the one word a hollow grimace. "I flew west a short distance. Nothing but preparations for war, and a war-torn land. We're preparing for a mass attack on the enemy capital. Going to drop troops down by de-gray chutes. Fine boys—the cream of the army—to deal out death and to die by Nelms Smith's new actino-thermal projectors!"

"Rutherford would listen," Bruce mused. "If you could only get to him. Too bad you can't shoot him a thought."

The words seemed to touch off a spark in the little scientist. He startled suddenly. "Bruce! That's it! If I can bring back a man's thought from the past, then I can transfer my own thought image in the present—from here to the White House!"

At one o'clock their preparations were complete. Dr. Benjamin lay down beside the last three vacuum tubes in the line. Their sockets had been tilted so that one arm of each tube would point down at him.

"You're sure you've figured everything out?" Bruce asked as he stared at the humming cables above him. A hazy, blue flame leaped and crackled along their length. "There's enough juice here to burn up the city."

"I've spent a lifetime on the the-

ory," Dr. Benjamin reassured him. "If it isn't right now, it never will be. Let's go, Bruce!"

The younger man put out his hand. He seemed to hesitate. Then with a jerky motion, he closed a switch and fed in current with a rheostat.

Some strange force gripped Benjamin. It pressed down upon him like a vise. But instead of crushing him, it entered his very being, gripped the core of his consciousness. The loft became a confused mass of light and sound in which he could no longer distinguish objects. The light faded. Then the sound. He began to float . . .

A HUNDRED miles east, fog rolled in from a storm-tossed Atlantic. It struck the rocky shore and curled up about the gray, granite pile of Herm Rohan's isolated stronghold, dimming the lights shining from the windows of the munitions manufacturer's third floor study.

Inside, Herm Rohan sat behind a gleaming mahogany desk. His bulk overflowed the chair. From folds of smooth, fat flesh his eyes stared without blinking at the heavy-set, swarthy man who stood before him. "You've had two days to locate them, Capreldi. You've failed."

Gray pallor crept up behind Capreldi's dark skin. "I tell you, boss, I've tried. My boys have gone through the capital with a fine-tooth comb." He spread his hands flatly. "No dice. Look, boss, the thing sounds sort of fishy to me. Thought men! What proof have you got they're really there?"

Rohan picked up a two-day-old newspaper from the desk and extended it. He pointed at an article outlined with red pencil. "Read that."

Capreldi's hands were shaking as he tore his eyes from Rohan's and focussed them on the paper.

CITY PLUNGED IN DARKNESS

... and during the confusion, many thought enemy ships had broken through the blockade and were approaching the capital in a surprise raid, until emergency dynamos were switched into action and the lights came on again. The cause of the sudden blackout is still unexplained. Authorities of the Department of Light and Power refused to comment. But through a fairly reliable source it has been ascertained that the plant was operating satisfactorily during the entire occurrence and is still operating satisfactorily, *putting out twice the amount of current necessary to take care of the needs of the city.*

"When Benjamin appeared before the Academy, that's what he wanted," Rohan said slowly. "They didn't give it to him so he's taken it anyway. Nelm Smith studied with Benjamin at the University. The little guy isn't nuts. He knows what he's doing. And you can't find him."

Capreldi's eyes dilated with fear. "Look, boss, I . . ."

A buzzer on Rohan's desk interrupted. Beside it, a red light blinked twice, paused, then blinked again. "An air cruiser," Rohan said.

Nelm Smith burst into the room, his pale face showing a spot of color at each cheek. "I've found them!" he exclaimed. "While Capreldi's watch-dogs were sniffing around the city and poking into holes, I took a look outside the insulation walls."

"No one's lived outside of cities since the war broke out," gritted Capreldi. "It's a federal offence to stay outside the walls except in a ship in motion."

"Quite true," Smith grinned. "But you forget Benjamin is desperate. He doesn't care if he breaks the law. I spent the afternoon cruising among those deserted estates north of the capital after my range-finder showed they were somewhere in that vicinity. I've found Benjamin's thought-men!"

"And the machine?" Rohan snapped.

Smith nodded, "In a warehouse loft on Forty Second Place."

"Good!" Herm Rohan jerked himself to his feet. "Smith, take a half dozen men and destroy that machine. Capreldi, see your men have actino-thermal projectors, and bring them along. I've got work for them."

STANLEY RUTHERFORD, President of the Combined Governments of the Western Hemisphere, raised up suddenly in bed. His senses, drawn thin and taut by the past few weeks, told him there was someone in the room. He reached for the call button beside his pillow, and a hand closed on his wrist.

"Please," a voice whispered. "Let me speak. Do you want to stop the war? Do you want a plan which the enemy will listen to—a plan for world peace?"

"How did you get in here?"

"I'll explain that," the intruder answered. "But first consider the fact that I *am* here, and that I couldn't have come in window or door. The windows are four stories from the ground. There are two very capable bodyguards out there in the hall. Listen."

Footfalls approached the President's bedroom from both ends of the corridor. They paused outside the door. The guards exchanged a whispered word and then proceeded on to their stations. President Rutherford turned on the bedlamp and stared curiously at Dr. Frank Benjamin.

"You may talk," he said.

Fifteen minutes later the President scrubbed a hand across his heavy jowl. "It's crazy," he said. "But it checks. Especially the part about Rohan. If that fiend was fighting you, then you've got something. Wait a minute." He slipped into his clothes and went to the door. Benjamin heard him call to the guards, and a moment

later the President led the way into the deserted hall and hurried across into another room. They went through the false back of a closet and up to the roof.

A guard stood on the landing. Rutherford pushed Benjamin behind a stack of empty fuel drums and sauntered out into the moonlight.

"Good evening, sir," the guard's surprised voice greeted Rutherford.

"Couldn't sleep, Murphy. Too much on my mind. I think I'll stay up here awhile. Would you go get me a top-coat?"

When Murphy had disappeared, Rutherford rolled out a light air cruiser. Not until they had taken to the air did he relax. "It's a dirty trick on Murphy," he said. "But he wouldn't have let me out of his sight. He'd have had to report to his chief what I wanted to do. There'd have been a conference to assign bodyguards. And it would have been morning before we got away. If Rohan and Smith are on your trail, we've no time to lose."

North of the capital they descended toward a towering group of trees. Inside a high cement wall was the rambling, run-down estate. As they approached the house, Benjamin saw the front door was open. "That's funny," he said. They pushed into the dusty hall, where furniture in white dust covers stood around in silent conference. Voices came from a drawing room on the right.

As they paused in the doorway, Benjamin gripped the President's arm spasmodically. He tried to shove him back. But Herm Rohan had already seen them. The munitions manufacturer gave a quick order, and two of Capreldi's men grabbed Benjamin and Rutherford. The rest of the gangsters had Socrates and his companions backed to the wall, menacing them with the blued snouts of actino-ther-

mal projectors. As Benjamin watched with horror, Capreldi spoke.

"Let 'em have it, boys!"

White fire leaped out at the ten men who had come back from the past to save a civilization. Fire that would break down their nervous systems and destroy their eyes, killing them with indescribable agony. Such was to be their reward.

But something was wrong. The ray had no effect upon them! And as Socrates stepped forward with a growl, powerful arms outstretched toward the nearest gangster, Benjamin understood. Projected into being by electrical current transformed into pure thought energy, the ten were impervious to this type of death. They were safe!

Then Benjamin shook his head. An odd feeling crept up through him. The room grew dim before his eyes. Socrates, too, stopped his bearlike advance. His form grew hazy. The other thought-men seemed to float nebulously up from the floor. And suddenly the world slipped away from Dr. Benjamin, and he drifted into blackness.

Someone had tampered with the machine! The little scientist's last conscious thought was of failure. The world would die, now, smash itself to pieces, run itself wildly into destruction—for it had no plan. And what of President Rutherford? His would be a small chance for mercy at the hands of Rohan.

DR. BENJAMIN awoke with the pungent odor of ozone strong in his nostrils. He still lay beside the three vacuum tubes in the warehouse loft. But they were blackened husks now, containing no light. The machine was a smoking heap of wreckage, shorted out to destroy itself. Nelm Smith and six men stood near the

(Concluded on page 112)



Where Editor and Readers Exchange Thoughts

SCIENCE FICTION invites you to write letters to this department, giving your views and criticisms. Address your letters to EDITOR, SCIENCE FICTION, 60 Hudson Street, New York City. Write us today!

Dear Readers:

You know, fans, if there's one thing that gratifies an editor more than anything else, it's an overwhelming reception his readers give to some theme introduced by him to the particular literary field in which he works.

And that's how I feel right now—gratified—because of your reception to Esperanto. During the past year or so, I used a few short articles in this magazine and our companion, FUTURE FICTION, about this new international auxiliary tongue, and I've really been surprised at the number of inquiries that have come in about it—and the many demands for more items about Esperanto—and even for short stories and articles in the tongue itself.

But for those of you who want to learn the tongue in a few short weeks, with hardly any study at all, an excellent correspondence course is offered by Esperanto-by-Mail, St. Albans, New York. Just for fun, why not write to them today and learn about Esperanto? For further information about Esperanto, you can write to Joseph H. Leahy, Esperanto Association of North America, 1410 H Street, Washington, D. C.

Here I've been raving on for paragraphs, when you're anxious to get to the batch of top-notch letters in this number. I'll say nothing further now—except to urge you to get acquainted with our companion magazines, FUTURE FICTION and SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY—presenting the same fine quality of science-fiction stories you find in this magazine. So, if your desire for fantasy is as insatiable as ours, you know where to turn!

And now—letter go!

CHARLES D. HORNIG,
Editor, SCIENCE FICTION,
60 Hudson Street,
New York City.

"EXCELLENT DEPARTMENTS"

Dear Mr. Hornig:

Having just got around to reading the latest issue of SCIENCE FICTION, I was much surprised to find a letter with my name at the end of it. After reading it over carefully, and your comment thereon, I must say that you have slightly misunderstood me. I neither said that science-fiction had degenerated, or that I was an adherent of the "good old days."

Good science-fiction cannot degen-

erate, for if it was good once, it will always remain so. Witness the stories of Wells, Smith, Stapledon, Lovecraft, Merritt, and others, that still retain their savor and popularity, although written from ten to forty years ago. It is not science-fiction that has degenerated, but the people who write and publish it. (No reflections on you, of course.)

My interest in science-fiction has not waned in the slightest, as attested by my increasing activity in fandom organization of The Stranger Club, contributions to fanmags, voluminous correspondence, etc. I still get as much of a kick out of reading a good science-fiction story as I did when I first read "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea," at the age of seven. There are more good science-fiction stories being written and published today than there ever were, but there are also at least twice as many lousy ones coming out now, due to the fact that the science-fiction market is almost as wide open as the western, love, and other pulp fields.

You say that the fact I keep buying science-fiction shows that I am still a fan whether I admit it or not. I not only admit it, but I insist upon it. Any guy that says I'm not a fan, had better be a good fighter, talker, or a fast runner. For I would personally take revenge for such an insult by tearing his arm off and beating him to death with the bloody end of it.

"The Planet of the Knob-Heads" was lousy. Coblenz is spoiling his reputation with these brazen rehashes of "The Blue Barbarians" and "In Caverns Below." His style always was crude, and I can now see that his satire is also.

"The Atom Prince" was such an obvious rehash of Cummings' other "atom" stories, that I won't even bother criticizing it. "Upon the Dark

Moon" and "Lever of Destruction" were clever, and entertaining in their way, but failed to click with this hard-to-please reader. "Women's World" was about the best in the issue, and it would have been made much better if it was a little more than a synopsis.

Before you throw this away, I'd like to praise you for the excellent departments. The magazine was worth buying for these alone. I hope you can continue to find enough interesting letters to keep the "Telepath" up to its present high level. "The Eternal Conflict" is good, and I gives promise of being better, and I shall discourse later upon Colton's theories.

One more thing, and then I'll go away. Put a notice (please) in the magazine about The Stranger Club. I would like all science-fiction readers and fans within fifty miles of Boston, Mass., to write me, if they would like to join the fastest growing fan club in the nation. We are putting out a pretty good fanmag and participating in numerous other fan activities. The more members we have, the more we can accomplish. We have sixteen already, and have only been organized four months. Watch the Stranger Club, and listen for its Voice, "Fanfare"!

ARTHUR L. WIDNER, JR.,
Box 122,
Bryantville, Mass.

(I always like to start off "The Telepath" with an exceptionally long and interesting letter. Yours is well deserving of the spot, this issue.

I know that your comments about the status of present-day science-fiction will interest the fans. I think that the quality of the stories will rise constantly to meet the increasing demand.

According to your comments on

"The Planet of the Knob-Heads" and "The Atom Prince," you do not like hash. I personally hope that you never have to live in a boarding house.

I hope that you get lots of letters as the result of this—for your very worthy Stranger Club. Good luck!—EDITOR.)

THE WRITER'S SENTIMENTS, ONLY

Dear Mr. Hornig:

The October issue of *SCIENCE FICTION* is on hand, and as usual presents a few items worth commenting on.

First, we'll take up the matter of Mr. Al Blake who complains about fans who say "this story is lousy," instead of "I think this story could be better." And you, Mr. Hornig, back him up! Tsk, tsch. When a letter appears on the editorial desk, it stands to reason that statements contained therein express the sentiments of the writer, and nobody else. Therefore, it's a waste of time to clutter up the letter with a lot of "I think's" and "in my opinion's", or "It seems to me's." Besides, the dime and a half we contribute towards the support of the mag entitles us to express our true opinions.

With that build-up, I'll start in on the stories by saying that "The Man Who Sold the Earth" is lousy. (First time I've used that particular five letter word in connection with any story.) "The Shadows from Hesplon" wasn't so good. (Tempted to use that word again.)

The other stories weren't bad. Nothing exceptional, just good, run-of-the-typewriter science-fiction. Give first place to your short-short "Life Cycle," though the dragged-in-by-the-hair love interest in Olsen's "Rhythm Rides the Rocket" was all that kept the latter from top honors.

Your departments are all good. "The Eternal Conflict" remains the best department idea thus far. I have one or two ideas of my own which I'll send in sometime, when I can shake off my perpetual case of lethargy long enough to write them up.

"The Telepath," due to the editor's personal answers, is the most interesting letters from readers department in any science-fiction mag; but how about a smaller type size to allow room for more letters?

Maybe some day a science-fiction editor will realize, as one already has, that in these days of screaming covers, a neatly drawn, attractively colored picture is the type that stands out. But until that great day comes, I suppose we'll just have to go on suffering, and imagine what Paul could do if given a chance.

LYNN BRIDGES,
7730 Pitt,
Detroit, Mich.

(As you say, the dime and a half you pay for this magazine gives you the right to "think" and "know" things about the stories, so you go right ahead.

The lurid covers do attract attention, you know—and most of our magazines are sold on newsstands where they must compete with many other publications.—EDITOR.)

THE SAGE OF SALT CREEK

Dear Mr. Hornig:

Volume 2, No. 2 of *SCIENCE FICTION* is considerably better than Volume 2 No. 1.

I liked "Death and the Dictator" best, followed by "The Man Who Sold the Earth," and "Rhythm Rides the Rocket." "Life Cycle" had some good points, too.

The cover itself is, of course, well done; Paul is at his best when draw-

ing complex machines and strange life-forms. However, the implications of the red rooster kidnapping the blonde in the swim-suit are rather ridiculous. Of course, his interest may be purely scientific!

Lin Streeter's pic for the Gallun's yarn is O. K. Some of the other illustrations aren't so good, though. It seems to me, that if you are going to continue using illustrators not regularly found in other science-fiction mags (which isn't a bad idea in itself) it would be a good idea to try a number of fan mag illustrators, as a couple of other magazines have done quite successfully.

The "news" in "The Fantasy Fan" is quite all right except for one thing; like the story of the sinking of the Maine, it isn't news any more! Most of it is history. Obviously, a bi-monthly can't be as up-to-date as the daily newspaper; but I think it could be a little more so.

"The Eternal Conflict" is much MUCH better than last issue. Frank Kather should draw some replies to his statements about atoms and atomic power. It may be true that we really know little or nothing as to the reality of the atom; but, so long as the theory works, it is just as true as the theories of electricity, light, and other forms of energy.

There are some interesting letters in "The Telepath." In particular, in the order in which they occur in the magazine, not in the order of interest, I liked those of Jerome S. Kalis, Al Blake, and Charles Hidley.

D. B. THOMPSON,
3136 Q Street,
Lincoln, Nebr.

(We think that Paul had a very novel idea on the October cover—he sort of reversed things in having the chicken represented by the monster, instead of the young girl. We

personally liked the cover, but we hope his chicken-monster design didn't "lay an egg."

I hope you'll be a regular contributor to "The Eternal Conflict"—as well as our other departments, which you express liking so much.—EDITOR.)

A FEMININE FAN

Dear Editor:

Well, here I am by request, if you remember. I've been reading science-fiction and pseudo-scientific works since I found a copy of Merritt's "Girl in the Golden Atom" when I was eight. In the ten years since then, I have read some work by every well-known writer from E. R. Burroughs to H. G. Wells, with a lot I don't remember besides.

I'm a fan purely and simply because I like to read the stories. Easy, huh?

For me, science-fiction means many enjoyable hours of reading with interesting questions brought up that I can think out for myself, besides.

I guess I'm about the only fan I know of right around here. I joined the Science Fiction League (Member 464 on the books) and through this organization got into correspondence with many fascinating people. All of these though (dern it) I lost touch with when I moved to Austin from El Paso—halfway across Texas on the map but over 600 miles. Some state, Texas!

I wish I could find some compadres (Spanish for friends, people with the same interests, etc.) around here. After all, I could hardly attend either the New York or Los Angeles meetings, now could I?

MOLLY ACREMAN,
1506 Palma Plaza,
Austin, Texas.

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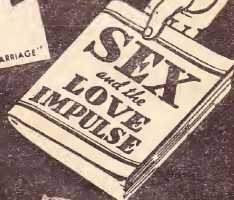
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Making Desire Known via the Special Language of Sex
Tactics the Wife Should Use
Helpful Devices to Sexual Union
Sensual Appeal; Spiritual Appeal
The Role in Married Love Life of Lips, Breasts, Tongue, Lobe of Ear, Neck

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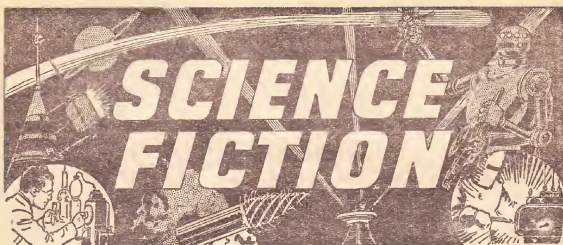
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WAR *VERSUS* LOGIC

An Editorial by CHARLES D. HORNIG

WE know that in time of war, it is the duty of every able-bodied man to give his life for his country. It is his duty to kill as many of the enemy as he can, before they kill him. If he goes onto the battlefield, there is about one chance in ten that he will be shot. If he is shot, there is one chance in four that he will die—and three chances that he will recover. But in time of war, it is not only legal for a man to kill another man—but necessary, according to the dictates of today's patriotism. We cannot contest these facts, because the majority of people in the world today believe in the righteousness of killing for patriotic reasons.

Allowing that all this is right, in the light of the modern world—we wonder if it can be right in the light of the Infinite? Using a little logic, we can easily see that every war takes a terrific toll in human life—and that, while those human lives can never be brought back, the original causes of the wars are always lost—if not in a year, or a thousand years—then they are surely lost in the course of a millenium. To the Eternal, then, all human justifications for war are but fleeting whims. But *we* are not eternal, and the fleeting whim is to us our whole life.

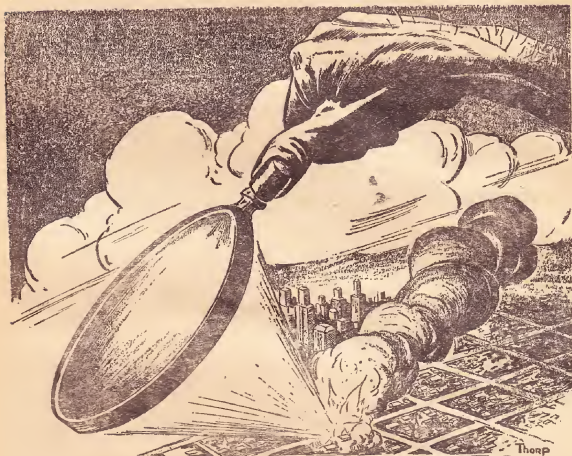
Everyone admits that it is wrong for the world always to be at war. Then, if the gross result is wrong, how can all, or even some, of the little particles be right? If war is evil, how can the causes for it be just? If war means destruction, how can the excuses for war be constructive?

WAR can never be eliminated as long as Man looks upon himself and his group with selfishness—selfishness in the light of the entire race from the beginning to the destiny. Perhaps, at some time far in the future, Man will place the value of the Original Gift—life itself—above the petty creations of his own ego.

Today it is the dictate of society that we should murder our fellow men in the defense of a mode of living. We must destroy the God-given gift to preserve the Man-given gift. Perhaps the day will come when Man will have more respect for the creations of the Higher Power than for his own creations! We sincerely hope so!

Bargain with Colossus

By HELEN WEINBAUM



The sun caught the glass, finding a focal point on the city below!

Goth of Uranus sought the aid of the Earthmen—but he found the Earth destitute of life—unless the men of Earth were too small for him to see! But in that case, he had unknowingly been walking on their cities, destroying the Earth civilization!

CHAPTER ONE

CATASTROPHE!

THE first warning was the tidal wave which swept Manhattan, sending rushing rivers of water uptown from the Battery. It came with hardly an instant's warning, drowning people like rats in flooded

subways, catching and sweeping with relentless force those unfortunates above ground to carry them like spinning straws till they thwacked dully against an upright traffic light or lamp post and there remained for a moment, curving their broken bones hideously around it.

Next came a frantic message from

a naval boat at sea. Some enormous object had been sighted off the Atlantic coast, an object which towered two miles upward and of so vast an area that it had not yet been determined.

Third came a frenzied call from Philadelphia—a mad, garbled plea for aid. A gigantic figure loomed on the outskirts of the city, seemed about to step into it, a monstrosity a mile high formed in evil, half-human semblance.

"Send bombs," the operator screamed, "airplanes! You must help!"

The line went dead.

At the same moment, a thick fog settled over a small portion of lower Greenwich Village, New York, and where it rested, buildings crumbled and disappeared.

DR. RICHARD CRAIG hurried from his uptown New York house that morning. Half last night had been spent organizing his rather disappointing year's research on the cause and cure of the common cold for a speech to be given before the annual Medical Convention. As a result, he had overslept.

On the top step of his brownstone house, he paused, looking with dismay at the water which swirled below. Strange. He hadn't known it was raining.

With sudden awareness of something wrong, he raised his head. The sun shone blindingly, glinting merrily on the eddying water. At that moment, the sound of a neighbor's radio reached his ears.

". . . damage from the tidal wave which swept over the Battery, demolishing the aquarium and buildings in down-town New York . . ."

A fire engine splashed by, stopping on the far corner. Men dismounted and started madly pumping water

from the streets in an effort to relieve the clogged, overflowing sewers. A police siren whistled. From far away sounded the rumbling crumble of a crash. Débris rushed past. The water seemed to be rising.

Craig turned quickly back into the house and switched on the radio. From every station rapid-fire, incredible, terrifying words tumbled at him.

Tidal wave! Buildings toppling! People drowned! The mammoth metal object which appeared inexplicably in the East Atlantic! The frightening, incredible figure over Philadelphia! Radio connections had now been made to that city. An eye witness' fear-ridden voice thrummed the receiver.

"This is a nightmare, unbelievable! That colossal, inhuman figure still towers menacingly over the northeast city. We see him clearly from here, and yet . . ." he paused to regain control of his quavering voice, "the bombing planes sent up claimed they were unable to locate him. But he is still there. *We see him!* And once he moves, Philadelphia will be demolished . . ."

Stunned by preposterous facts beyond the bounds of belief, Craig switched off the radio and buried his throbbing head in his hands. The metal object in the Atlantic, by its enormous displacement of water, *might* have caused the tidal wave now sweeping New York. But what of that gigantic figure casting a pall of fear over Philadelphia? Where had it come from, and why could a thing of that size not be located by bombing planes?

Unable to reason further, he rose, pocketed a small telescope, and made his way out to the swirling streets. If he could reach a high enough spot to catch a glimpse of this monster.

His heart lightened at sight of the small, wiry figure of Alfred Hamilton

splashing ankle-deep through the water in his direction. The brilliant little Professor of Astronomy was his closest friend. They had mulled over many a theory of the cosmos together, for Craig, though a Doctor of Medicine, had a deep interest in the subject. Hamilton had probably come now to get his reaction to the shocking developments.

"What do you make of it?" He tipped his shaggy head back to peer up at Craig out of near-sighted, spectacled eyes.

"Nothing." Easing the hurriedly donned coat more comfortably over his broad shoulders, Craig wrinkled his brow in perplexity. "Except that possibly the thing in the Atlantic is what's causing this flood," he looked ruefully at the water swirling about his bedraggled trouser legs.

Though the water seemed to be ebbing now, the city was still a gruesome sight. Bodies, spewed from the inundated subways, lay sprawled grotesquely on the street; everywhere was debris: the broken frame of a baby carriage, a delicately wrought chair warped now almost beyond recognition.

"You know what I think?" Hamilton spoke slowly, gripping Craig's arm to compel attention. "I think that thing in the ocean is a space-ship, that the figure menacing Philadelphia is life from another planet!"

"But—" The first word of objection was out before the realization hit Craig that even Hamilton's incredible statement was less startling than the facts. If the news flashes were to be believed, a mile-high figure *did* tower on the outskirts of Philadelphia. And such an extraordinary visitation warranted the most extravagant flights of imagination in explanation. "Why can't the bombing planes locate him, though?" he finished lamely.

BEFORE Hamilton could answer, a terrific, thundering crash broke the silence of the street. Due to the rush of water, all traffic had been suspended; few people braved the flood, those who remained unharmed being occupied in moving to upper floors in case the water continued rising.

Stunned by the suddenness of the ear-rending crash, the two men waited tensely for a repetition of it. When none came, they turned without a word and started splashing in the direction from which it had come.

As they moved farther downtown, the water deepened. Often debris came at them so swiftly, they barely had time to step aside to let it pass. Once, in an effort to avoid an onrushing crate, Craig slipped and fell full length in the swirling water. Before he could regain his feet, he was carried backward to land with a painful thud against the protruding arm of a building. Dripping, he rose and fought his way to Hamilton's side again, arriving breathlessly in time to hear a cryptic murmur.

"Philadelphia calls for aid, yet it is New York which is being destroyed!"

Barely had the questions engendered by Hamilton's words arisen when they were driven from Craig's mind by the sight which met his eyes as he rounded the corner and came in view of the park. Speechless, with only the heaviness of his breathing to reveal his utter mental confusion, he stared aghast at the vista before him.

Beyond the inundated park where the buildings huddled close, hung a narrow, misty fog, as if a gauze curtain had been dropped to cover a part of the landscape. And exactly where the transparent fog lay the *skyscrapers had utterly disappeared!* Like the gaping hole left by an extracted tooth, a full block of yawning foggy empti-

ness stood between the clearly sunlit buildings on either side.

Suddenly the streets awakened to life. Hysterical screams and fear-stricken voices pierced the air. Within a few minutes, the park was alive with people, scuttling senselessly to and fro in mad, unreasoning haste.

A radio in an abandoned taxi blared to unhearing ears. It was the voice of the Philadelphia announcer.

" . . . While the giant appears to have stepped into our city, strangely no damage has been reported. Either this is an optical illusion, a mirage, or —" he faltered, "or something beyond understanding"

As Craig paused to gather the scattered, unrelated facts together in his mind, he felt his arm grasped impromptu by Hamilton.

"Look!" The word was hardly more than a whisper, yet the terror and confusion behind it compelled Craig's attention.

Hamilton pointed upward. From the gaping hole in the buildings across the park, the fog was lifting, going high into the sky where it was almost lost to view.

Then, with a deafening crash, the eighteen story apartment building across the street disappeared—vanished utterly, leaving only a foggy, nebulous, gauze-like mist stretching upward.

They stared, aghast. There had been no shower of bricks and concrete; of the block-square building not a single trace remained! In the blink of an eye, it had been crushed, leveled to the ground, with only transparent fog and a slow-rising dust to mark the spot where it had stood.

On their backs, the sun still shone warmly.

They were pushed and buffeted by the maddened crowd milling the streets. Pandemonium reigned as the

frenzied populace realized there was safety nowhere, that disaster might reach its arms even to the shelter of their homes.

"I'm going into that fog," Craig shouted above the din.

"Don't! It will destroy you!"

Even as Hamilton spoke, Craig was half-way across the street. As he neared the curb, rising dust from the razed building filled his nostrils. He stifled a sneeze and continued.

Then suddenly a blow on his forehead threw him forcibly backward to land with a hard thud on the street. Regaining his feet he stood blinking dazed, incredulous eyes. *There was nothing before him*, nothing to block his progress, nothing—but the tenuous fog!

"What happened?" Hamilton was beside him, peering up at the reddening bruise on his forehead.

"I don't know. It felt as if I ran into a brick wall. That fog isn't a fog at all," he exclaimed. "It's tangible!"

Together they walked cautiously toward the invisible barrier, their arms outstretched. The fog was solid, warm. Unable to penetrate it, they felt its rough surface even as they peered through to the other side as if it were a gauze curtain.

Then abruptly from the west came another rending crash. Startled, with their hands still touching the invisible surface, they felt it move, slide upward beneath their fingertips. As they watched, the fog lifted high into the sky, moved westward and disappeared. The air was clear. Where the building had stood but a scant few moments before lay nothing but eddies of swirling dust. Granite, steel, and marble had been crumbled as if an imponderable weight had settled upon them.

Silently they walked back across the street to lean weakly against a

building. Craig was the first to speak, mumbling half to himself as if only in that way might he clarify the startling facts in his mind.

"First the buildings at the edge of the park, then here. . . . A distance of about half a mile. . . . Why didn't destruction sweep the city completely instead of only at scattered intervals. . . . ?"

"In view of preceding events," Hamilton said softly, "it could be only one thing. A giant like the one seen in Philadelphia is plowing through New York."

He paused as the radio still blaring in the taxicab caught his attention.

". . . . a flash from New Jersey. Palisades Park has crumbled. . . ."

"You see," the Professor continued, "he has stepped over the river."

"You're right!" Craig exclaimed, "only there aren't *two*. This is the one seen from Philadelphia. Remember that though the giant seems to be moving there, the city has suffered no damage. Probably its physical construction is tenuous, not entirely bone and muscle. Therefore, from close up, the body is half transparent, though from a distance it can be seen. Let's find a high spot to watch!"

WITHOUT waiting for Hamilton to agree, he dove into a doorway.

The elevator was on the ground floor, deserted. Quickly he ran it to the top and raced up a short flight of stairs to the roof. Where Palisades Park had been was a bleak expanse of nothing. To north, south and east the air was clear, but on the west horizon rested a heavy fog.

They watched tensely as gradually the fog took form: two arms, two legs, a bulbous body, a round, hairless head! Mile high in the air it towered, a gigantic, awesome figure blocking

out the sun which threw a corona of light about it.

"Incredible," Hamilton breathed. "A thing of that size, alive!"

Craig stared fascinated. The giant's movements were slow, ponderous, blundering; his form was man-like, yet somehow differently proportioned, grotesquely exaggerated: the head was too large, the back humped and misshapen, the arms and legs devoid of muscular bulges.

"I'm afraid you were right, Alfred," Craig spoke dully without moving his eyes. "Such a colossus could come from nowhere but another planet. And the metal thing in the ocean is the spaceship which brought him. But *why* has he come here?"

A heavy boom drowned Hamilton's answer. Bombing planes circled the gigantic head; flashes of flame shot upward from guns below. Ceaselessly bombs dropped, shells flew, planes circled to get a better aim. The giant continued steadily forward, unhindered by man's futile attempt to destroy him.

Now half his body had dipped below the horizon. On the apartment roof, the two men shuddered at the thought of the trail of destruction which must lie in his wake.

As the top of his head faded from view, they turned slowly away, the boom of puny, man-made guns still reverberating in their ears.

Those fortunates who remained unharmed had strange stories to tell. The Chrysler Building had been seized by an inexplicable shiver; pictures were thrown sidewise—office clerks, thinking it an Earthquake, stricken with panic.

Later, in western Pennsylvania, a mile-square fire had started without warning, raged for half an hour and then died mysteriously at the moment fire engines arrived. It was not with-

out damage, however. The thing which had smothered it was the heavy, tenuous fog of the giant's body which left nothing but dust in its wake.

Farther on, a soundless rumble shook the countryside. Windows in otherwise unharmed buildings splintered to bits; people in that vicinity became suddenly deaf, their eardrums shattered, doctors said, by some sound of too low a frequency for them to endure.

In Kansas, a hurricane swept the dust bowl, toppling houses, uprooting trees, killing hundreds.

Havoc piled upon havoc, destruction upon destruction. Though half-mad with terror, human efforts to destroy the gigantic, shifting menace continued. Poison gas, dynamite, bombs, the largest cannon in the world detached from its battleship and towed in the wake of the blundering colossus—all failed!

Though shell after shell found a mark in the tenuous fog, they had no effect. Not a drop of blood was shed nor a cry of pain heard. Desolation and destruction followed the gigantic footsteps through Pennsylvania and thence into Ohio. The invader was beyond man's power to destroy.

CHAPTER TWO

TINY WORLD

LANDING his space-ship in the Atlantic, Goth left it with hope in his heart, and forgetting the sickness which gnawed his body, strode shoreward, his eyes fixed eagerly on the curvature of the small planet, searching a sign of life.

Tentatively he removed his helmet and was encouraged to find the air of the troposphere pleasant and energizing to his lungs. Despite difference in size, he reflected, humans who lived

under conditions similar to those on Uranus probably had much else in common with the people of his planet. And he needed their friendship and aid—direly!

In mid-ocean he paused for a moment, his heart bounding again with hope as he decided that such a small world must harbor a race of small people. Only such a people could produce the delicate workmanship to fulfill his need.

As his foot touched land, however, the first doubt struck him. Nowhere was a sign of life, no buildings, no monuments, no evidence of human habitation. He strained his weak eyes westward. The country was flat, unbroken. Save for small patches of green vegetation and a few tiny stalagmitic spires, nothing even approached ankle-height. He took two steps inward.

Then suddenly he paused, stooping to peer along the level of the ground. There *was* something here—a tiny spire-like formation which hardly looked like the work of nature, not nature as he knew it, anyway. He touched it tentatively, gently, running his fingers inquiringly along the spire. Then, to himself, he smiled. How foolish of him! It was probably only some strangely-formed, petrified particle. Such a tiny, useless thing could not possibly be man-created.

Standing upright, he took another step, blinking his weak eyes downward searching cultivated land, animals, buildings—anything to show him there was civilized life on this planet. The sun burned his eyes, accustomed to a dimmer light. In its bright, pitiless glare, he could see nothing. He lowered his lids against it.

At the fourth step, hope dwindled. As far as he could see, there was no evidence of life. He had come on a

fruitless mission and must return unsuccessful to Uranus to watch his people die. Despair seized him.

Then suddenly a new thought struck his mind. Suppose there *was* life here, but life so small that it was outside his vision's range? That tiny spire he had bent to finger, the small rocks crumbling to dust beneath his feet.

Uranian scientists had conceived of Earth life as perhaps a tenth his size, but not this tiny, *not invisible!* His heart sank. How could he possibly communicate with beings he could not see?

Bending, he made out the thread of a river below and on its bosom tiny, stick-like barges plying to and fro. Yes, he had been right. There was the evidence of man-habitation.

As he continued forward, a dim, red glow far below penetrated his weak sight. Momentarily his heart contracted. It reminded him of the fire-birds of Uranus, of how as a child he had held their elusive flame bodies and cried as they turned dead and black at the touch of his fingers. Memory of home brought new determination. The very life of his people rested with him. *He must succeed!*

Withdrawing a lens from his belt, he bent to inspect the land more closely. Over his shoulder the west sun caught the glass, finding a focal point on the city below. The dry roofs smoldered, then burst to flame. It was only a second more by his reckoning before he saw the tiny blaze. Quickly he lowered two fingers and smothered it out.

Placing his body so the sun could not catch the glass, he peered through it again. Strain his eyes as he might, he could catch no glimpse of life, no movement, no tiny forms bustling about their daily tasks. Yet vaguely he saw tiny, vari-colored squares of

land with here and there clusters of box-like cells.

He took another step forward, bent again, and began to speak, peering through his glass at the largest of the clustered cells. It was undoubtedly a vain attempt, for their language must be different from that of Uranus, yet perhaps if they heard his voice, they could read the pleading in it, would know he meant them no harm.

"People," he said softly, "if there are people here, listen"

HIS voice dwindled off. Through the magnifying glass, he had seen part of the side of one cell splinter to bits at the sound of his first spoken word. Though he did not know it, that tiny shattered window was the glass side of the largest department store in Pittsburgh.

He rose despondently. Even the sound of his voice carried destruction to the people whose friendly aid he needed so direly. How could he hope to communicate with these tiny Earth-mites, how make them understand his need of them? Yet, he must. The continuance of his race was at stake.

For three minutes he stood immovable—almost an hour, Earth-time. Then happily it occurred to him that though life here was beyond range of his vision, he by his enormity must be clearly visible to them. Of course! By pantomime he could make his message known.

First raising one hand as a sign of peace, he stretched both arms to their full length, cupping his palms upward in a pleading gesture. "I have come for aid," he concentrated intensely. If both speech and pantomime failed, perhaps telepathy would reach them. "Your help, your friendship. Find a way to communicate with me!"

For a few moments, he waited.

Time sped by on terror-stricken Earth below. Stooping, he peered again through the lens, despairingly, as minute followed minute. No sign met his eye, no evidence that his gesture had been seen or his telepathic message received. To his weak, straining eyes, the land looked as always: the forests like vague uneven grass, the cities like a cross-section of a beehive dropped in heavily sown turf.

Yet it seemed impossible that his gigantic body could have escaped notice. To Earthmen, he was even larger than the Giant Marsaurus was to the people of Uranus, and when that colossal, frightening shadow swept the land, its soaring body was clearly visible to Uranian eyes.

Standing upright, he resumed the pleading gesture, holding it until his arms tired. Lowering them at last, he watched again through the lens. When no sign appeared, he heaved a deep, despondent sigh. An hour later the hurricane swept Kansas.

In the midst of his despair, an infinitesimal pain caught one leg. At intervals before he had felt these tiny pricks, never coming farther upward than his knee. He rubbed his tingling skin a moment and the pain disappeared.

Then again a faint pain hit him—and another. Shells from the largest gun in the world shot upward ceaselessly in an effort to destroy the menace which trod over Earth. The tiny, pricking pains troubled him but a moment, however, before they disappeared.

But slowly a thought was forming in his mind—memory of the miniature spire he had caressed, of the glass which had shattered when he spoke. Apparently he had been walking through tiny cities, crushing civilization underfoot, trampling to death the men who produced it. He who had

come to ask for life was destroying life!—and these infinitesimal pricks which every now and then caught his legs were their desperate puny attempts to drive him off.

His was a peaceful errand! How could he gain their good will now, their aid, even should he succeed in making them understand? The havoc he had wreaked would alienate them forever. Again he sighed, unwittingly creating more destruction, by his disturbance of the air, sending another hurricane to sweep the Kansas dust bowl.

His pantomime of peace had failed, his voice shattered the windows of their buildings; he could hear no sound from them, they could hear none from him. When they sent him here, the scientists of Uranus had not considered that. They had thought only that the language would be different, and expecting beings a tenth the size of Goth, felt pantomime would serve until the language could be learned.

But here was a civilization totally invisible to him, built by beings so minute that his weak eyes could not even catch sight of them through a glass. And worse, by the failure of his pantomimed plea to bring a reaction, he assumed that they could not see him!

Nor had the Uranian scientists considered that the rumble of Goth's voice would be of such low frequency that it could be neither heard nor endured by the life on Earth.

His mission was hopeless. There was no way, no possible way of intercommunication between him and the Earthmen. As his heart settled in despair, he felt the sickness gnaw his vitals, making the knowledge of failure doubly bitter.

He had turned reluctantly toward the sea to retrace his steps when he

remembered. There was one more chance, one thing he had not tried, one last futile attempt he must make to tell his story before he accepted defeat. Yet . . . his heart pounded dully . . . this mechanism of communication had been designed to fit the eyesight of people one tenth his size. For these Earth mites, it was like tossing a straw to the sun.

It was improbable that beings so small had developed instruments effective enough to read his message. The moon lay over 200,000 miles distant. By relative size, that distance was proportional to the distance of Earth from Uranus. And even through the super-telescopes of the gigantic Uranians, Earth's face could be seen but vaguely. Yes, that attempt too was doomed to failure. But it needed only that to make his defeat complete.

Shrugging, he withdrew an apparatus from his belt. Until he had made every effort to save his race from extinction, he would not return to Uranus with a death sentence for his people.

He waited a few moments, thirty minutes Earth-time, until the sun had disappeared far past the horizon. Tonight the moon came to fullness. That, at least, was good. He needed some encouraging omen from Nature to counteract the hopeless settling of his heart.

CHAPTER THREE

SHADOWS ON THE MOON

THAT night Irving Kent, an amateur astronomer, reported strange shadows coursing over the face of the Moon. His telescope was small, however, and he could not trace their origin.

Simultaneously from observatories came similar reports.

The world went mad. Telescopes were hauled from attics, eyes strained toward the sky. Forty-second Street, New York, suffered a worse traffic jam than in all history as curious, panic-stricken laymen crowded about the privately owned telescopes waiting their turn. Riots started when the first in line refused to relinquish their places.

At the first report, Craig and Hamilton had flown to the Naval Observatory at Washington. Since the giant's arrival, both had come into prominence: Craig by his analysis of the invader's tenuous physical construction and his deduction that he came from a gaseous planet; and Hamilton because of his stubbornly repeated conviction that the invader meant Earth no harm, that it was through ignorance and not intent that he had caused such disaster.

For an hour preceding sunset, the giant had stood without moving, the outline of his body visible only from a great distance. Then, just after dark, he had taken a strange instrument from his belt. Directly thereafter the strange, eerie shadows had appeared on the moon.

To the naked eye, the configurations seemed *merely* shadows—but in the Naval Observatory, the moon's face caught through the eye of the telescope was reprojected onto a large screen so that all in the room might watch. For future reference, a permanent film was made.

Men entered the quiet room, their hearts contracted with fear. All knew this latest occurrence stemmed from the mighty invader standing splay-legged over Ohio. Up to now, the sequence of events had been too interlinked for them to doubt it: the flood, the destructive fog of his body, the shattering low frequency rumble, the repeated gesture which they had mis-

interpreted as threatening—and now this play of shadows on the moon.

Only a drastic desire could have brought the super-being to Earth, only an importunate demand make him so persistent to be heard. Fear-struck, they watched the white screen to discover what they must sacrifice to his invincible presence.

Yet how were they to understand this alien's symbols?—and how accede to a demand which their minds could not encompass?

Their first sight of his projected message confused them: a concentric, flaming ball in three dimensions, making the thing so real they felt its liveness in the room. Smaller balls surrounded it, ten non-luminous spheres at varying distances from it. Then a darting arrow affixed itself in the seventh from the center.

At once it dawned. The Solar System, with the arrow pointing to Uranus! But why *ten* planets? Earth knew only nine.

"So it's true," Hamilton breathed, "the tenth exists and is visible from Uranus!"

The moment was too tense for Craig to answer. He sat spellbound by the three-dimensional picture relayed from giant to moon to telescope to screen. A story was unfolding, a human story, picturing tragedy on Uranus with a poignancy that gripped his heart.

He saw figures contoured like the giant, misshapen backs, muscleless arms and legs, tenuous at first, then taking clearer form. These were the people of Uranus. And they were distracted.

First came an industrial scene. Figures busily fed a strange, gaunt machine. Then suddenly a worker put one hand to his head, staggered dizzily, and dropped. The others retreated from him hastily, muttering among

themselves, pointing aghast at his prone body, fear taking their features. The fallen man was wheeled from the factory—dead.

Next came a hospital room, crowded with wasted forms. One was taken to an operating room and given a blood transfusion. He died. Another underwent a different operation. He too died.

The scene shifted to a laboratory, its walls lined with strange, vaguely recognizable instruments. Doctors peered through microscopes, made cultures, filtered. Their faces grew more discouraged at each failure. A parade of dead bodies passed beneath the window.

Yet, with the zeal of scientists, they persisted! Strange, lizard-like birds were exposed to the virus. They wasted and died. A giant, furless rodent met the same fate. Cultures were taken from them both, put on slides and surveyed through microscopes. The scientists shook their heads. A more powerful microscope was used, cultures dyed, mixed, filtered. Still they could neither see nor isolate the virus of the disease. And still dead bodies passed ceaselessly by the window.

Finally one figure took the screen, pantomiming a request for aid. In one hand he held a microscope. "You are small," he said as clearly as if he mouthed spoken words, "your microscopes can detect the virus. Help us!"

He stretched a hand pleadingly outward. The scene faded.

In the Naval Observatory, there was a moment of silence, then a babble of excited voices.

"He's come for aid—"

"You were right, Hamilton—"

"—get rid of him. Tell him we can't help . . ."

"Tell him," Craig shouted, to make himself heard. "But how?"

The room lapsed to silence.

"And we *must* help," he continued in a lower voice. "Their need is plain. Humanity demands it. They have searched out our smaller world in good faith."

"Even so," a man called Dobson objected, "our world has suffered enough damage under the clumsy feet of their emissary."

"Still we must help," Craig persisted, "and the sooner we do, the sooner he will leave. The only question is, how can we communicate with him? And after that, how manage to examine a body of that size?"

"A movie," Hamilton suggested. "We might flash our answer on the moon as he did."

"Impossible," Dobson objected.

Again there was silence.

"We *must* find a way," Craig rose to pace the floor. "Even if only to ask him not to move until we can clear a pathway to the ocean so he can reach his space-ship. We can't have more of this destruction. Perhaps we could erect an enormous screen—"

"Would even that be visible?" The skyscrapers of New York escaped his notice," Hamilton mused. "I don't believe his eyesight is even proportionately as acute as ours. We are to him as ants are to us; yet we can see ants clearly. Still he is unable to see us."

CRAIG turned nervously. "But now he is watching—waiting for our answer. It is of the utmost importance to him. Without our aid, his people must die. According to the pictures, Uranian scientists have tried everything. All evidence points to a highly developed science there: space-travel, their laboratory equipment, three-dimensional pictures. Their science surpasses ours. But," he turned suddenly, "there is need of haste. We must communicate with him before he

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loses hope and leaves. How can we do it?"

"We might take a projector up in a blimp and shine pictures on the ground," Hamilton offered.

"That's it!" Craig exclaimed. "And we must have a light, an enormous red light larger than anything ever made before, to guide him through a cleared passageway to the sea."

"Then you're not going to help—"

"Yes, I am," Craig answered slowly, "but the Atlantic Ocean is the only place we can bring his body within our reach. He can wade out as far as necessary." As excitement gripped him, he spoke rapidly. "We must equip a battleship with a complete laboratory and do our research there. And now," his face awakened to action, "we must get busy."

Government cooperation was procured easily. Ridding Earth of this invading colossus with as little more destruction as possible was of prime importance. Recklessly, Craig took the direction of operations on his own shoulders.

Within a day, an action film was hurriedly pieced together. The 200-inch reflector, the largest in the world, was taken from the observatory at Palomar Mountain, California, and used on the reverse principle of a telescope to expand a two million candle-power light sufficiently to catch the giant's eye.

A five-mile-wide pathway was cleared along a railroad track through Pennsylvania and Maryland; people were routed out like rats, whole cities evacuated, bought by the Government to be demolished under the gigantic feet. A battleship containing a completely equipped laboratory was anchored off Maryland, a block-long flag fastened to her mast.

The invader still faced west. At a mile's distance from his gigantic

body, the mammoth light was placed on freight cars and lit. From a blimp, a projector was focused to throw an enormously enlarged picture on the ground at his feet. Observers with telescopes stationed on top of the Wrigley Building in Chicago tensely watched for a sign that his weak eyes had found the light.

Goth was about to turn back to his space-ship, having given up hope that his message on the moon had been seen, when his eyes were attracted to the red glow below. His heart bounded. He bent his head to inspect it closer.

From the Wrigley Building a radio message was sent to the blimp.

The picture started. Block-high figures shadowed across the ground.

The story was simply told—first a short laboratory scene where a doctor offered aid. Then came a picture of the sea, of a battleship with a block-long flag flying from her mast. And finally, by double exposure, they showed a giant man following a red light to the sea.

Fearing he might have missed its import, the picture was run again. From Chicago word came that, as he had watched the action, a slow happy smile had crossed his face.

The train bearing the mammoth light moved. All America waited. Had the invader grasped the import of their message? Would he follow the light, or would he cross haphazardly to the ocean, sacrificing yet more lives under his cumbrous tread? The nation hung in a breathless silence.

The train covered one mile . . . two miles. . . Still the giant had not moved. It slowed, started its third mile. At last he raised his foot.

Toe first, he set it down, tentatively, gently. Despite the destruction he had caused, observers were touched to see with what care the clumsy, blundering

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colossus now moved, to note that his forehead was wrinkled in awed wonder at the scientific achievements of this minute life underfoot.

Beyond his wonderment, Goth felt little but an overwhelming thankfulness that hope for his people lay ahead.

In this manner, he followed the red light to the sea. America watched his progress from afar, blinking their eyes against the unbelievable fact of his gigantic presence.

On the ship off the coast of Maryland, Craig and Hamilton waited. As Goth came too close for visibility and the outlines of his body faded to a foggy mist, the battleship weighed anchor, unfurled the block-long flag, and started out to sea.

When the ship was at a safe distance from shore, the giant took two steps outward. Along the coast the tide rose high, sweeping up past high-water mark.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE BARGAIN

GOTH walked forward gingerly, feeling for a sudden drop in the ocean bed, keeping at some distance from the ship, as if aware that a too abrupt movement of his body might send it floundering.

When he was waist-deep, the flag dipped wildly. Reading the signal aright, he stopped.

From overhead, the blimp threw another enormous picture on the water, showing a doctor inoculating a patient.

Goth understood instantly. Drawing a sealed vial from his belt, he laid it on the bosom of the sea. It was a tiny thing to him, only half the length of his palm, but to the watching Earthmen it was as large as the battleship on which they stood. How

could they investigate the contents of a thing that size?

With one finger, Goth pushed the vial gently toward the ship. With the movement of his body, waves rose, the ship wallowed and plunged. For a moment it seemed she must go under.

Drenched by the water which swept the deck, Craig clung to the rail.

"Wire for the fire-boat," he shouted.

The vial bumped the ship with a heavy thud. Goth straightened and stood upright, silhouetted foggily against the sea.

Again the ship plunged. Unmoored, the vial floated from her side. Seeing that, Goth bent again to push it close. This time the crew was prepared. Two men were lowered to the vial's surface and ropes lashed about it.

A hole was drilled through the strange metallic top and part of its contents pumped into a barrel.

Hamilton stood by mystified as these operations were being carried out. At last, unable to contain his curiosity longer, he pulled at Craig's sleeve.

"Why did you send for the fire-boat? And what do you think that stuff is?"

He pointed to the barrel being lowered to the deck.

Craig was tense with excitement. "I think that's a sample of the virus," he said hurriedly.

"But the fire-boat—"

Craig was hurrying toward the laboratory with a part of the solution. By the time Hamilton arrived, he had already fixed a slide beneath the microscope. As the Professor entered, he pushed the microscope aside.

"Well, we won't need that." He was peering intently at the slide with his naked eye. "Filterable micro-organisms to Uranians are the size of fleas to us!"

Hamilton bent to look.

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clearly visible, wriggling, spiral, pathogenic organisms. Quickly Craig isolated them and made a pure culture.

He tried several leads without success. While some virulent poisons might effectively kill the germs, he doubted that these could be used with safety on a living body. At last, unsuccessful, he mounted the companion-way and ordered the flag dipped as a signal for the giant to approach.

Goth had stood waist-deep in water patiently awaiting that signal. He strode over eagerly, bending low to peer at the boat bobbing in the backwash of his movement.

As he neared, the opaqueness of his body melted to tenuous fog. The humans on board clung tightly to the rail of the plunging boat. Why hadn't they warned him to move slowly? Surely the boat must capsize under the mounting waves.

However, as if he sensed their terror, Goth paused until the water calmed.

The fire-boat Craig had ordered stood nearby. From the laboratory of the battleship a tank of tuberculin was brought and transferred to its deck. Craig followed, mounting the derrick which held the hose. Under his direction, it was swung around until he was able to reach the invisible, foggy flesh.

HE plunged a surgical knife deep into the transparent substance, cutting a gash twice the length of his own body. Into it gallons of tuberculin were pumped.

The hose was lowered and filled with the vaccine of small-pox, with the toxin of typhoid. Goth was inoculated with all diseases common to humanity. Then, the battleship weighed anchor and sailed at a distance from which his massive form could be seen.

Twenty-four hours later Craig

turned excitedly to Hamilton, handing him the telescope through which he had been studying the giant's body. Five red patches were scattered at intervals over the enormous right arm.

"Positive reactions," Hamilton remarked, squinting through the glass, "which proves that Uranians are subject to the same diseases at Earthmen. That should simplify finding a cure for the virus. It may be only one of our own micro-organisms enormously enlarged—"

"But only *five* reactions," Craig interrupted excitedly. "I inoculated him six times. *Which disease is he immune to?*"

"What difference does it make?"

"Maybe none at all; maybe a lot." He paced the deck slowly. "I'd think nothing of it if he weren't already suffering from another disease, the one for which he wishes us to find a cure. You see, it *might* be that virus which makes him immune. So," he turned suddenly, "for our own sake, we must discover which disease brought no reaction. We may have hit on something important."

BACK in the laboratory, Craig made an extract from the unknown virus, inoculating with it animals already infected with various diseases. To calm his nervousness while waiting for sufficient time to elapse to prove results, he turned again to finding a cure for the Uranian plague.

It was disheartening work. X-rays, iodine, sulphur, ammonium hydroxide—all proved ineffective.

While he worked, Hamilton, bored with the inactivity, moved aimlessly about the laboratory. As he passed Craig, his arm brushed against a bottle. It crashed to the shelf, spilling its contents in a wide circle.

Craig jumped back, surveying the

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wreckage of his experiment irritably. Virus solution, broken glass and white powder lay in a muddled pool.

"Well," he said, "that finishes that."

In an effort to make amends, Hamilton was brushing debris from the table.

"Don't muddle any more," Craig said, "just bring me some fresh virus solution from the barrel on deck."

Hamilton started toward the door.

"Wait!" Craig's eye had been arrested by the action of the spilled germs. "Something's happened."

The spiral germs wriggled madly at first, then suddenly ceased all movement. Craig stirred the mess with his finger. They lay unresisting, dead.

"That does it," he shouted. "Al! What was in that bottle you broke?"

Hamilton grubbed amid the broken glass on the floor, emerging triumphantly with a small labeled bit. "Sodium chloride," he answered.

"Salt! Common salt! I'd never have tried that in a million years."

"A fine example," Hamilton answered, "of why one should never cry over spilled—salt."

TO Goth, the graphic picture shone a few hours later on the water brought joyous relief. He had almost abandoned hope. Now knowledge that life would continue on the planet which was his home, that his people would survive, filled his heart with an overwhelming gratitude to the Earth-mites who had found a cure for the disease which was wiping them out. He felt the sickness of his body half-pleasurably, knowing that soon it would torment him no longer.

As he released the worry which had been taunting him with a deepchested sigh, strong waves buffeted the Atlantic coast.

From his belt, he withdrew the pro-

jector and waited for the moon to rise. It was waning now, yet still enough of its lighted surface remained for his message to be seen.

Uranians had been hopeful of receiving aid from Earth, and they had not been disappointed. Now payment for the inestimable debt must be offered.

Expecting an answer to the pictures flashed from the blimp telling that a cure had been found, Craig and Hamilton hurried to the Naval Observatory. They arrived in the midst of a heated argument.

"This is our chance!" A tall Government official strode the room. "We can demand anything from Uranus in payment for the cure. Platinum, gold. . . Billions of dollars worth of gold. It will put the country on its feet—"

"Radium is of prime importance," Dobson said angrily. "Radium can save lives."

"And so can gold! I insist that we demand gold!"

"Gentlemen," Craig interposed, "Uranus may possess neither. Let us wait to see first what she has to give, perhaps some new element far more valuable than either radium or gold. However," he smiled slowly, "I anticipated your desires. A film is being prepared now which pictures elements from the most valuable to the least. It is a difficult thing to portray and the Uranian may not get our meaning, may not understand the mathematical relationships of the elements, still—"

He stopped abruptly as the lights in the room went out and the face of the moon, caught by the telescope eye, was transferred to the screen. "Here is our answer," he finished.

But it was not an answer. The second film had not yet been projected. The picture Goth now showed, prepared previously on Uranus as an ex-

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pression of gratitude in case a cure was found for them on Earth, offered in payment the things Uranians valued, *objects d'art* which though they might prove valuable as collectors' items or curiosities, would not appreciably change the economic status of Earth.

First came an expression of gratitude. A Uranian offered a delicately wrought piece, a thing of minarettes and spires which shone with glistening beauty; then a carved, winged bird of no sort ever seen on Earth. Other art objects followed, and always there was heartfelt gratitude in the face and gestures of the giant who offered them.

"If they are so appreciative," Dobson said irritably when the picture had run its course, "they should offer us something of intrinsic value."

"We will be adequately paid," Craig said softly.

When morning came, the Earthmen's answer was given the giant. The art objects were refused and valuable elements requested. The list was run down and then repeated. To the rarest and most valuable Goth shook his head in negation, spreading his arms wide to show Uranus had little of them. To the less rare he nodded eagerly, but on consideration, the Earthmen decided it would not pay to import anything of less value than radium, gold, or platinum from the far planet.

In the observatory they held council.

"It is what we should have known," Hamilton said. "The spectroscope shows that other worlds are composed of the same chemical as ours, and in about the same proportion."

"But what shall we do?" the government official blustered. "We must receive adequate payment for our salt, for the destruction this giant caused, and for the cure we give him."

"We will receive payment," Craig said quietly, "worthy payment, but not for the salt. It is not necessary to send salt to Uranus. There must be plenty there, just as there is here. However, in payment for the research and destruction we must demand that a test-tube—one of their test-tubes," he amended, "filled with the live virus be dropped on the Atlantic Ocean every twenty years."

There was a shocked silence.

"The virus!" Dobson breathed incredulously.

Craig nodded. "In terms of human lives, that bargain is the best we could make. We are trading lives for lives. That virus," he continued slowly, "is the only cure ever found for the common cold. And I ought to know," he added ruefully, "I've spent most of my life searching one unsuccessfully."

Several hundred tons of salt were dropped from planes to Goth's spaceship. Small though that amount was to Uranians, scientists could analyze it and mine more on their planet.

Wearily Craig returned to the house he had left only a week ago. So much had happened since then. He sighed tiredly and looked about the debris-filled street. His life's work was over; the common cold would claim no more lives. Yet beyond his tiredness, he had a feeling of well-being. Size wasn't might, by any means. He had driven a good bargain.

Goth was perplexed as he waded towards his space-ship and moved the tons of salt to its interior. Why had these Earth humans not made a better trade? Uranus had been willing to give her best.

Earth had given him a cure which meant life to his people, and in return had demanded only one test-tube full of the evil virus to be dropped on the Atlantic every twenty years. Oh well. . . . people were queer. . . .



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(Continued from page 84)

door. At their feet lay Bruce Stebbins, a bloody welt on his head. One of the men raised a projector as Stebbins stirred.

Smith nodded. "No use leaving anyone to spread tales," he said. "Finish him off."

Benjamin stared wildly around him for a weapon. His hand touched a tube. It was hot to the touch, but he yanked it from its socket and flung it with one swift motion. The twenty-five pound missile struck the man and knocked him down.

Smith turned with a curse. His eyes narrowed at sight of Benjamin. "Burn him down!" he gritted to the men. But as their weapons swung up, President Rutherford's voice sounded from the door.

"Hold it! You're all under arrest!"

A dozen federal men moved into the room. Dr. Benjamin reached Stebbins in three strides and helped him to his feet. "You all right?" he gasped. Bruce nodded.

The little scientist turned to Rutherford. "but how . . . ?"

"It seems we didn't fool Murphy when we took off from the White House," the President said. "He brought some men and followed. They captured Rohan, Capreldi, and now Smith."

President Rutherford put his hand on Benjamin's arm. "And here's some news you won't mind hearing," he said. "Our friends from the past worked faster than you thought. They completed their plan. It's all down in the neat hand of Alexander Hamilton, a document that history will remember. Certain of its major premises have already borne fruit, for I've contacted Ruler Machelko of the enemy. All hostilities have ceased, and he meets me at a rendezvous halfway between our respective blockades at noon tomorrow to study the plan."

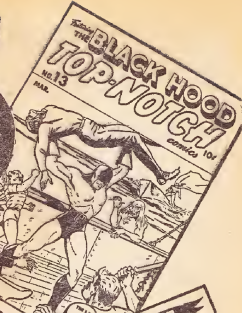
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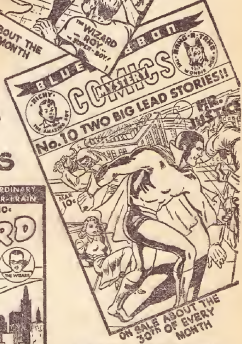
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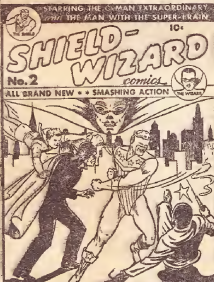
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